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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# COLLEGE ACADEMIC CHAIRPERSONS:
# CONFLICT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

BY

DEVINDER SINGH SEKHON ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Edmonton, Alberta
SPRING 1994

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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# DEDICATION

Dedicated to my respected father, S. Dalip Singh, and to the everfresh memory of my sweet mother, Mrs. Gopal Kaur, both of whom worked very hard to help me achieve my goals.

# ABSTRACT

Chairpersons of academic departments in colleges play an important role in running the affairs of their departments (Bennett, 1983; Tucker, 1984). This study was undertaken to determine the sources of conflict faced by the chairpersons in a medium-sized college in Alberta, the strategies they used to manage conflicts, and the values that underlay their conflict handling strategies. All the available chairpersons - former and present - were interviewed using Flanagan's critical incident technique. The data were analyzed using Miles' and Huberman's content analysis technique. The causes, the strategies, and the values that emerged were categorized.

The sources of conflict were compared to the ones reported in the literature. Most of the sources identified in the present study are similar to the sources reported in the literature; however there were some differences. Disagreements over academic matters and student issues were found in this study only. On the other hand, frustration, organizational structure, deference, and non-compliance, which were reported as sources of conflict in some other studies, were not identified in this study. These differences may be related to the nature of the organization.

There were similarities between the strategies identified in this study and those reported in the literature but, as with sources of conflict, there were some differences too. For example, preventing or containing conflict was used quite frequently by the chairpersons, whereas it was not a significant strategy in other fields; similarly, utilizing professional help to change behavior was not reported in other fields but was used by the participants. There was a limited support for Pondy's conflict model, the "open systems" model and the "process model".

Values identified in the study could be readily categorized using Hodgkinson's threefold typology, or Ashbaugh and Kasten's typology, but they were very different from Rokeach's list. Again, the differences may lie in the nature of the organization and the group of people studied.

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## IMPORTANCE OF THE CHAIRPERSON POSITION

According to many researchers and scholars, chairpersons of academic departments play an important role in running the affairs of a college. For example, stressing the importance of the role of chairpersons, Bennett (1983) writes:

> It is at the departmental level that real institutional business gets conducted . . . The department chairperson is the one responsible for seeing that these things actually get done as they should. As a result, one can argue that the chairperson is crucial in the success of an academic institution. (pp. 1-2)

Similarly, Tucker (1984) describes the importance of the chairperson's role as follows:

> The increasing complexities of operating institutions of higher education, along with shrunken budgets, have led deans and other university administrators to delegate more and more tasks to department chairpersons. Thus, it is in the best interests of colleges and universities to ensure that department chairpersons become as knowledgeable as possible about planning, management, and leadership techniques. (p. 1)

Maintaining a similar view on the importance of the role of the chairperson, Mason (1991), writes:

> The academic deanship is in many ways the most difficult administrative position in a large college or university. . . . The dean is truly the man in the middle, "the chief medium of communication" and "creative link" between faculty and administration. The dean must work with both the president and the faculty and may not move out of the middle position; he cannot agree with the president and disagree with the faculty over an important issue or vice versa. (p. 503)

Mason has also cited a Brock University report on the role of the dean. The Report reads

> The Dean should remain an active member of the academic community. This implies that he should retain his academic appointment, have tenure in a department position, at his discretion be active in teaching and research, be eligible for sabbatical leave and enjoy the other rights and privileges of his academic colleagues. (p. 504)

Commenting on the above report, Mason writes:

> This kind of suggestion places the dean in a position very similar to that of the department chairman, whose effectiveness as a link between faculty and administration has been due, indeed to his usually undisputed status as a full member of the faculty component. (p. 504-505)

So, in Mason's judgment the role of the dean described above in the Brock University Report, is actually the role of the chairperson in a college or a university.

An investigation was conducted by Michael (1988) in which he interviewed 16 chairpersons of academic departments at the University of Alberta. He reported that, on average, chairpersons spent only 17% of their time on teaching and research. The remaining 83% of their time was spent on the administration of their departments.

Even though there are some differences in the percent of time spent on teaching and research between the chairpersons at the universities of Alberta and those at the colleges, the latter still spend a lot of time on managing the affairs of their departments. And Michael's research supports the arguments of Bennett (1983) and Tucker (1984)on the importance of the role of the chairpersons of academic departments at colleges.

From the above discussion it is clear that chairpersons of academic departments at colleges play a very important role in managing the affairs of colleges.

## CONFLICT IN ADMINISTRATION

Managing conflict in organizations is one of the major tasks of administrators. No matter how smooth an operation an organization may be running, there will still be some conflict and the administrators will have to deal with that. There are two important issues with regard to conflict:

First, almost all researchers and scholars now agree that conflict in organizations is a natural occurrence and is unavoidable. There can only be a difference of degree. Some organizations have a little less conflict than others, but all of them do experience some conflict.

> Conflict is pervasive in all human experience. Indeed it can occur even within a single individual (so-called intrapersonal conflict), typified by approach . . . And of course, conflict runs the gamut of social experience - between individuals, between groups, and between whole societies and cultures.
> (Owens, 1987, p. 244)

Bolman and Deal (1991) maintain that the larger and more diverse a group, the greater the potential of conflict and vice versa. Frey and Young (1978) believe that conflict is not only ubiquitous but is also on the rise in educational settings. "Conflict exists whenever human interaction occurs. It may vary in frequency, intensity, and/or duration, but it is a part of human existence.

Conflict in educational settings appears to be on the rise" (p. 18).

Burns (1978) could not imagine a healthy or a vibrant group of people without some conflict. He writes:

> The potential for conflict permeates the relations of humankind, and that potential is a force of health and growth as well as for destruction . . .. No group can be wholly harmonious . . . for such a group would be empty of process and structure. (p. 37)

Second, traditionally conflict was thought to be destructive because it generated hostility, mistrust, and lack of cooperation among workers. It was considered divisive because it would pit workers against each other. Furthermore it was believed that conflict caused managers to be secretive and to apply coercion to end conflict which caused alienation among workers, and the workers' morale plummeted. Most of the time conflict would result in a win-lose type situation - each side wanting to win. So, both sides spent a lot of time developing strategies. Thus a lot of time and energy was wasted. The result was much lower productivity, which caused a further dislike for conflict on the part of management.

Now, however, many scholars are of the opinion that conflict is not bad in itself. Many even believe that conflict provides the organizations with an opportunity to improve things. Commenting on the positive aspect of conflict, Owens (1987) writes:

> The central thesis of contemporary behavioral science applied to conflict is that - with diagnostic and management approaches now available - it is possible not only to minimize the destructiveness of conflict but also, in many cases, to deal with it productively.

(p. 245)

Heffron (1989) goes even further. To him the absence of conflict is a sign of an unhealthy organization:

> A tranquil, harmonious organization may very well be an apathetic, uncreative, stagnant, inflexible, and unresponsive organization. Conflict challenges the status quo, stimulates interest and curiosity. It is the root of personal and social change, creativity, and innovation. Conflict encourages new ideas and approaches to problems, stimulating innovation. (p. 185)

Assael (1973) holds similar beliefs:

> Interorganizational conflict is beneficial when a more equitable allocation of the balance of power and economic resources results by the formation of new countervailing forces and greater balance and stability within the system. (quoted in Loewen, 1983)

In a similar vein Ruben (1978) writes:

> Conflict is not only essential to the growth, change, and evolutions of systems, but it is, as well, a system's primary defense against stagnation, detachment, entropy and eventual extinction. (p. 206)

Kelly (1979) looks at conflict as a source that stimulates growth in organizations

> Conflict and differences of opinion contribute to the health of an organization, for it is from the crucible of such differences that new and better methods emerge. Unresolved differences, however, are dysfunctional and block human growth and a ction. The goal of an effective organization or leader, especially in a pluralistic culture, is not the reduction or elimination of conflict. Instead, the goal is to increase organizational or individual capacities for handling conflict. (p. 11)

Pondy (1967) maintains that conflict could prove useful to managers if they wished to create one or more of the following:

> a. A confusing situation within their organizations to cover unstated objectives.
> b. A diversion among their subordinates so that they might be called in to mediate the dispute they instigated.

> c. A conflict situation with an out-group to maintain or increase the cohesiveness of their in-groups. (p. 310)

To Pondy conflict is a tool which can be used by a skillful administrator. Thus we see that it is not conflict that is good or bad; rather, it is the way conflict is handled which can be good or bad. Administrators who handle conflicts effectively are considered more successful, those who cannot handle conflicts effectively, less successful.

Since conflict is a reality of all organizations, even educational institutions are not insulated from it. Dealing with conflict must be a major task of all chairpersons. Therefore it becomes very important to find out how chairpersons handle conflict or what strategies they use to resolve conflicts. However, there is little information on this. The investigation reported here was carried out to address this lack of information.

## VALUES AND MOTIVES

According to many researchers, administration is value-laden (Barnard, 1964; Hodgkinson, 1978 & 1983; MacIntyre, 1984; and Miklos, 1986). In other words values affect significantly the decisions that administrators make and the ways they handle conflicts.

For example, Hodgkinson (1983) cannot believe that administrative decisions can be made independent of values. Discussing how decisions are imbued with values, he writes:

> Two things now show clearly . . .. First, the central place of decision making in administrative processes, and second, the general pervasion of the administrative enterprise with values: notions of good and bad, right

> and wrong, benefit and cost, efficiency, and effectiveness and so on. These two features are, of course, related in logic since it can be shown that it is impossible to free decision processes of the value components. The three irreducible elements of decision are facts, probabilities and values. (p. 29)

Foster (1986) is of the view that administration without values leads to a crisis of confidence. He does not seem to have confidence in administration which is not based on values. Commenting on the role of educational administrators he writes:

> In addition to controlling the empire through controlling the budget, administration makes a statement of values and possibilities. An administrator must deal with technical issues, of course, but these can be learned adequately and possibly more effectively on the job. . .. We view administration and education in the context of wider social arrangements and attempt to reflectively comment on the relationships that obtain between these elements. How does administration contribute to the society we have? In what ways does it impede or enhance our cultural ideals and values? These are difficult questions, yet if they are not asked (and too often they are not), our administration and our patterns of education will remain in the same rut that has led to a crisis of confidence in education and schooling. (p. 10-11)

Similarly, stressing the importance of values in administration, Miklos (1986) observed:

> A study of administration which ignores purposes and goals . . . inevitably elevates the routine and the trivial at the expense of what is truly significant. Much greater attention should be given in our analysis of administration to the cultural values which are realized through, and are reflected in, the institutions of education as well as to the ways in which individual values impinge on administrative decision making. (p. 3)

Many researchers believe that not only do values play an important role in administration, but they can also change the goals of organizations. Osborn, Hunt, and Jauch

(1980) made the following comments on this role of values, "Much of the literature concerning the general environment of organizations assumes that differences in values lead to different organizational goals, internal structures, and internal operations" (p. 131).

Johns (1989) believes that people choose occupations that correspond to their values, and that members of different occupational groups espouse different values. He goes on to say that differences in values may be responsible for conflict between organizations and within organizations when members of different occupations are required to interact with each other (p. 119).

On the international scene, values or morals play a significant role in making decisions, even in wars. Commenting on the ethical aspect of international conflict, Hoffmann (1989) writes:

> The contradiction between attempts at moralizing international politics and the actors' free resort to force accounts for the ideological and historical diversity of the ways of dealing with the subject. Ideologically, at any given moment we find a range of attitudes which go at one end from absolute pacifists, adepts of non-violence who reject any use of force at all, to glorification of war at other end - as a historical necessity and a moral good, as a force which, as Hegel saw it makes people transcend the selfishness, mediocrity, and inevitable corruption of civil society and tests the virtues of citizens and states. (p. 151)

In finding out how administrators manage conflict, it is also desirable to identify the values that underlie the strategies they use.

Hodgkinson (1983) holds that values entail motivation, and that motivation is subsumed in the concept of values and the terminologies for two concepts can be used interchangeably. Expressing this belief, Hodgkinson (1983) wrote:

> From what has been said it follows that the terminologies of motivation and value are to some extent interchangeable and reinforcing . . . it being understood that motives are sources or originating factors in our value systems. They can be taken as elements which are subsumed within the general language game of values (pp. 52-53).

However, motivation of workers can be affected by the values of the administrators and, therefore, by the kind of supervision the workers are subjected to (Sergiovanni,1988)

In 1954 Abraham Maslow proposed his theory of human needs. He arranged human needs as a hierarchy and proposed that once a lower level need is met, humans are motivated to fulfil the next higher need in the hierarchy. Since then a number of studies have been done to determine the need levels of workers in various fields to motivate them.

Working with engineers and accountants, Herzberg (1964) concluded that not all human needs serve as motivators. He divided the needs identified by Maslow into two categories - hygiene factors and motivators. He believed that the lower level needs (physiological, security, and social affiliation) were not motivators; only higher level needs (esteem, autonomy, and self actualization) could serve as motivators. Herzberg's belief is supported by a number of studies (Sergiovanni, 1988).

For example, some research has shown that teachers are at the esteem level of need for their motivation.

The values held by administrators - especially the ones that underlie their supervisory and decision-making styles - affect the motivation of the workers supervised by them to a large extent. The styles can enhance or erode the motivation of the workers. Expressing the relationship between the nature of supervision and the motivation of teachers, Sergiovanni (1988) wrote:

> The motivational base for human resources supervision consists of needs of each of the five levels but focuses on those that we describe as higher-order. The limited motivational basis for traditional and, to some extent, human relations supervision is totally inadequate for providing personal and professional growth opportunities that professionally oriented teachers seek. (p. 141)

Sergiovanni (1988) goes on further to say:

> When schools and supervisors rely on normative authority in obtaining compliance from teachers they are likely to find that teachers are morally involved in work. When one is involved in a calculated way with work, the relationship is tenuous. Moral involvement, on the other hand, bonds together the teacher with his or her teaching. Motivation and commitment are by-products of one's sense of obligation to professional and group norms and the meaning and the significance that one derives from the work itself. (p.154)

From the above discussion it is clear that motivation of teachers depends upon the quality of supervision that the teachers are subjected to and the norms prevalent (culture of the organization) at the schools. Since instructors at the Alberta colleges are as much professionals as the teachers in schools, the motivation of the former is also affected by the quality of supervision they are subjected to and the extent to which they participate in decision making processes.

Chairpersons of academic departments in Alberta colleges are involved in supervising the members in their departments. They evaluate the members and recommend them for tenure and even for dismissal if the performance is unacceptable. Thus we see that the values held by the chairpersons affect the motivation of their colleagues. This provides another important reason to investigate the values of chairpersons.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As will be shown later in detail, very little research has been done on chairpersons of academic departments in public colleges to determine what conflict sources the chairpersons have to deal with, and what strategies they use to manage conflict in their respective departments. Also few data are available about the values held by chairpersons.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Because of the lack of the above mentioned information, the present research sought answers to the following questions.

a. What are the sources of conflict?

b. What are the strategies used by chairpersons to manage conflict?

c. What are the values that underlie the chairpersons' conflict management strategies?

d. How are the strategies used related to the sources of conflict?

## JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The effectiveness of organizations is reported to be related to the ability of their leaders to deal effectively with conflict. Describing this link, Likert and Likert (1976) write:

> The success of an organization is influenced greatly by its capacity to achieve appropriate coordination rather than hostile conflict among its functional departments and also to stimulate differences and then to capitalize on them by productive problem-solving leading to creative and acceptable solutions. . . . Institutions based on traditional organizational theory . . . lack the capacity to deal successfully with the conflicts created by the new demands which recently legitimized values are placing on them. (p. 7)

Similarly, based on the results of a number of studies, Thomas (1976) wrote:

> The literature also provides some indication that collaboration, in addition to promoting substantive achievements, promotes the satisfaction of personal needs. . . . A study done by Aram et al. (1971) found that team collaboration was positively related to several measures of member self-actualization and well being. (p. 910)

From the above discussion it is clear that in order to find the effectiveness of chairpersons as leaders, it is important to find out what strategies they use when they manage conflict. In addition to that the study will also be important in other ways as follows:

- Even though many studies have been done on managing conflict in industrial settings, not many have been done in educational settings. The present study will help reduce that vacuum.
- The strategies used by college chairpersons to manage conflict will be compared to the ones reported in the literature and used by administrators in other organizations to find out whether chairpersons use the same or different strategies.
- The findings of the study may be helpful also to college boards and senior administrators in planning professional development for chairpersons in the area of conflict management.

## DEFINITIONS

### CONFLICT

Different theorists have defined conflict in different ways. For example Coser (1968) defines social conflict as "a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals" (p. 232).

Deutsch (1971) defines conflict in a similar way. Quoting him, Borisoff and Victor (1989) write, "Conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur . . .. An action which is incompatible with another action, prevents, obstructs, interferes with or injures, or in some way makes it less likely or less effective" (p. 1).

Thomas (1976) defines conflict as "the process which begins when one party perceives that the other has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his" (p. 891).

In the above definitions, even though it is clear that reference is made to two parties involved in a conflict, there is no direct mention that the parties are interdependent. Hocker and Wilmot (1985) define conflict as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the party in achieving their goals" (p. 230).

Johns (1988) thinks of conflict as a process and defines interpersonal conflict as "a process of antagonism that occurs when one person or organizational subunit frustrates the goal attainment of another" (p. 443).

Johns (1988) also distinguishes between interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict. According to him **intrapersonal conflict** "occurs when an individual is confronted with incompatible goals or action tendencies or a single goal that has both positive and negative features. Such a conflict is usually characterized by approach-avoidance tendencies" (p. 469).

Coser (1956) has further differentiated between **realistic and non-realistic conflict** as follows:

> Struggles for the acquisition of scarce values are realistic because they are directed toward specific external ends e.g. a strike by a labor union for higher wages. Non-realistic conflict is only tension releasing, self-rewarding aggressive action. It serves to express the feelings of a conflict actor rather than achieve goals external to him e.g. family feuds and gang rumbles. It has some consequences for the social system. (Himes, 1980, p. 13)

Sexton and Bowerman (1969) define crisis conflict:

> Crisis conflict occurs when external situations are suddenly "dumped upon" the administrator. They are characterized by the immediacy of the problem situation and demand accelerated response to reach a solution. Examples of crises include a dramatic drop in sales, a big law suit, or an unexpected strike (p. 2).

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Most theorists have used the terms conflict resolution, conflict management, and conflict handling synonymously and without defining them. Coombs and Avrunin (1988) define conflict resolution as making a choice between options. They write, "An individual in making a choice between options, is resolving a conflict" (p. 49).

Johns (1988) defines conflict resolution in a similar way and equates conflict resolution to finding a solution to the conflict problem using one or more strategies. The conflict is either resolved or reduced. However he has made distinction between conflict resolution and conflict management. He considers conflict resolution only one part of conflict management; the other being conflict stimulation. He suggests that there are times when administrators wish to stimulate conflict rather than reduce it to bring about a needed change in their organizations (p. 453).

So, conflict management includes both conflict resolution and conflict stimulation. However, in the present study, conflict resolution and conflict management will be used synonymously.

## VALUES

As in the case of conflict, various theorists have defined values in different ways. For example, Hodgkinson (1983) defined values as "the concepts of the desirable with motivating force" (p. 120). To Coombs (1971) the term "value" is ambiguous. He likes the term "value judgment" instead, and defines value judgments as "those judgments which rate things with respect to their worth". For example, the statement "Nixon is a good president" expresses a value judgment.

Rokeach (1977) considered values as beliefs, and defined values as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence". He defined a value system as an "enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance" (p. 222).

Francis and Woodcock (1990) also think of values as beliefs and define values as "beliefs about what is good or bad, important or not important. . . . Values beget attitudes which specify behavior. . . . The values of those who hold power fundamentally shape the character of an organization" (pp. 3-4).

Kasten and Ashbaugh (1991) write:

> Values, then, are implicit or explicit assertions about what is desirable, of worth, important, and useful. They are standards against which plans, actions, and motives can be measured. Values are also screening mechanisms that can be used to reduce information to manageable dimensions. (p.55)

## TERMINAL AND INSTRUMENTAL VALUES

Osborn, Hunt, and Jauch (1980), explain the two types of values - terminal and instrumental - as follows:

> Terminal values center on the desirability of end-states. Instrumental values deal with the attractiveness of means toward an end. Terminal values set boundaries on systems and output goals. Terminal values are also reflected in the derived goals of organizations. For example many business organizations in the U.S. now accept pollution control and equal opportunity as derived goals. . . . Job enrichment is an example of an instrumental value because providing an interesting and challenging job is an important instrumental value in itself. . . . Perhaps the best-known and most important set of instrumental values is the "work ethic". (pp. 135-36)

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## CONFLICT

Conflict has already been defined in a variety of ways in chapter 1. Theories of conflict, assumptions, classification (types), sources/causes, and models of conflict will be discussed in this chapter. Functional and dysfunctional aspects of conflict, role of power in conflict, and conflict management strategies will also be discussed.

### INEVITABILITY OF CONFLICT

It has already been discussed in Chapter 1 that many theorists and scholars now maintain that conflict is a natural occurrence in organizations. It should not be looked at as something to be feared, and that it should not be avoided. Acknowledging the reality of conflict in social organizations, Wehr (1979) expressed his beliefs as follows:

a. Conflict and fighting is innate in all social animals including humans.

b. Social conflict originates in the nature of certain societies and how they are constructed.

c. Conflict occurs because it is functional for social systems.

d. Conflict between societies occurs because each, as a nation - state, pursues often incompatible national interests.

e. Conflict is a consequence of poor communication, misperception, miscalculation, socialization, and other unconscious processes.

f. Conflict is a natural process common to all societies with predictable dynamics and amenable to constructive regulations. (Hocker & Wilmot, 1985, 5-6)

Hocker and Wilmot (1985) concluded, "We see conflict as a natural process, inherent in the nature of all important relationships, and amenable to constructive regulations through communications" (p. 6).

Thus we see that conflict pervades all organizations including educational institutions.

## TYPES OF CONFLICT

Scholars have identified various types of conflict. For example Argyrus (1957) identified the following four types of intrapersonal conflict:

a. A person allowed to do only one thing when he likes two.

b. A choice between two when neither is acceptable.

c. Risk of punishment for doing something that one likes.

d. Alternatives in choices, but still risk of punishment.

Coser (1956) has identified two types of conflict - realistic and non-realistic. Realistic conflict arises from frustration. Struggle for the acquisition of scarce values are realistic because they are means towards specific external ends. A strike by a labor union for higher wages is an example of realistic conflict. Non-realistic conflict, on the other hand, serves to express the feelings of a conflict actor rather than to achieve goals external to him. Such conflicts are reflective of needs to release tension; they are just a lust to fight. Family feuds and gang rumbles are examples of non-realistic conflict. Non-realistic conflict has some unintended consequences for the social system.

Bolton (1979) adds that non-realistic conflict stems from ignorance, error, historical tradition and prejudice, dysfunctional organizational structure, win-lose types of competition, hostility, or the need to release tension. Coser (1968) has differentiated between legitimate and non-legitimate conflicts. According to him conflicts are legitimate when they are required, endorsed, or permitted by the universalistic norms of an inclusive social system, for instance those of a society or a community. Terms like non-violence, protest, struggle, reveal popular perceptions of this. The property of legitimacy may be attributed to both the ends and the means of conflict.

Non-legitimate conflicts are those which are prohibited or disapproved by the universalistic norms of inclusive systems. They are "conflicts that exceed the limits imposed by societal consensus. Terms like violence, political conflict, rebellion, etc. reveal collective recognition of the judgment" (p. 234).

The three types of conflict - Type I, Type II, and Type III - identified by Coombs and Avrunin (1988) are very similar to the four types identified by Argyrus (1957). They are explained below.

**Type I**. Conflict within an individual because he is torn between incompatible goals such that no option exists which satisfies his goals maximally. This is the type of conflict in which there exist tendencies both to approach and to avoid some goal.

**Type II**. Conflict between individuals because they want different things and must settle for the same thing.

**Type III**. Conflict between individuals because they want the same thing, but must settle for different things.

Likert and Likert (1976) differentiated between substantive and affective conflict. Substantive conflict is rooted in the substance of the task and springs from job-related frustration. "The issues may include conflicting needs, disagreement over policies and practices, and differing conceptions of roles and uses of resources" (Bolton, 1979, p. 223). Affective conflict, on the other hand, touches the emotions of individuals involved in an interpersonal relationship. Bolton (1979) does not think that these are two distinct types of conflict. He thinks of them as two aspects of conflict which are intertwined and difficult to separate.

Conflict has been classified in many other ways. For example Beck and Betz (1975) divided conflict into two categories - intra-stratum and inter-stratum. Intra-stratum conflict is conflict between groups of equal power, and inter-stratum conflict is conflict between groups of unequal power (Loewen, 1983).

Carroll (1974, p. 56) identified four types of conflict.

a. **Intrasender**: the focal person perceives that he has received incompatible expectations from a single member of his role-set.

b. **Intersender**: the focal person perceives that he has received incompatible expectations from at least two persons who are members of his role-set.

c. **Interrole**: the role expectations associated with a role the focal person assumes are perceived to be incompatible with the role expectations of some other role he is required to assume.

d. **Person-role**: The focal person's role expectations are perceived as being incompatible with his personal value system or set of ethical norms.

Deutsch's (1973) classification of conflict is based on the ways conflict is perceived. He has identified six types of conflict. Five of these include misperceived conflict, only one is based on the correct perception of conflict. The types are:

a. **Veridical:** Conflicts that are accurately perceived.

b. **Contingent:** Conflicts in which an obvious solution is not perceived.

c. **Displaced:** This kind includes conflicts which focus on wrong issues.

d. **Misattributed:** Conflict centered on the wrong person.

e. **False:** Completely misperceived conflict.

f. **Latent:** The kind of conflict which is not perceived at all.

Lippitt's (1982) classification is based on areas of disagreement which include facts, methods, goals and values.

## SOURCES OF CONFLICT

No distinction seems to have been made in the sources and causes of conflict in the literature. Therefore, the two terms will be used synonymously in this study.

Himes (1980, 34) believes that one or more of the following five factors lead to conflict:

a. instinct
b. tension
c. dialectical interaction
d. structure, and
e. frustration-aggression

These factors are explained below in brief.

**a. Instinct:** Every individual is born with a full complement of instincts including pugnacity, acquisitiveness, and self protection.

**b. Tension:** Typical features of modern urban industrial societies tend to build up tensions in great numbers of individuals. Common conditions include congestion and crowding, complexity of social organizations, impersonality of relations, and social change and instability. Human beings are ill-equipped genetically to cope with such conditions.

**c. Dialectical interaction:** drawing upon the work of Hegel, Karl Marx claimed that the development of capitalist society forces the creation of two sharply contrasting social classes - the bourgeoisie who own the means of production (land, tools, materials etc.), and the proletariat who own only their labor. Schellenberg (1982) has quoted Marx on this theory of conflict.

> It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or what is but a legal expression for the same thing - with the property relations within which they had been at work before. The fact that no nation has been essentially free of civil strife for as long as a generation at a time, such statistics may as well lead us to think of collective violence as a normal part of our world and age, not something abnormal or bizarre. (p. 136)

**d. Structure:** Newman (1973) formulated a structural theory of intergroup conflict. He argued that two structural variables - a vertical factor (stratification and rewards) and a horizontal factor (social status) determine the emergence, frequency, intensity, and violence of intergroup conflicts. For example, when an individual belonging to a lower stratum (vertical factor) works hard to occupy a position in the society with the same status (horizontal factor) as individuals from a higher stratum, the individuals from the latter stratum scorn such a competition, and as a result conflict originates.

**e. Frustration-aggression**: the major formulations of the frustration concept are (i) deteriorating material conditions, (ii) rising expectations, (iii) relative deprivation, (iv) rise and drop, (v) status inconsistency, (vi) cognitive dissonance (vii) unreciprocity, and (viii) reduction of interaction.

According to the frustration-aggression concept the working class feels that the quality of their lives is deteriorating because they are expected to work harder, and there are more demands on them. As a result their families are deprived of many necessities. They try to mingle with the higher class but the response of the latter is discouraging, and there is less and less interaction between the two classes. The working class is becoming more and more enlightened about its poor treatment by the upper class and, as a consequence, there is a potential for conflict between the two classes.

Himes (1980) believes that any one or more of these factors is at the root of any conflict. However these may not directly trigger a conflict. The apparent cause(s) of a conflict could be completely different.

Deutsch (1973) has listed five major causes of conflict, which are:

a. Control over resources, b. preferences and nuisances, c. nature of relationship between parties, d. differing values, and e. differing beliefs.

Main and Roark (1975) have identified very similar causes of conflict but add misperception (or missed perception) to the list of causes of conflict.

Pondy (1969) believed that communication and lack of understanding were the main causes for conflict, in addition to others. He identified the following as main causes of conflict

a. Lack of understanding between management and workers.
b. Communication, or lack of it.
c. Functional interdependence and scarcity of resources.
d. Jurisdictional or boundary ambiguity, perceived increase in departmental friction, departmental interdependence, and obstacles to communication.

Lippitt (1982) believed that some psychological factors such as misunderstanding, communication failure, personality clashes and value differences were the main cause for conflict. However, some other factors as listed below could be equally responsible for conflict. They include

a. Goal differences
b. Substandard performance
c. Differences over methods

d. Responsibility issues
e. Lack of cooperation
f. Authority issues
g. Frustration and irritability
h. Competition for limited resources
i. Noncompliance with rules and policies (p. 67)

Lippitt has also listed some factors which could lead to unnecessary conflict (p. 71):

a. Poorly defined jobs, tasks, responsibilities, and ranges of authority.
b. Prior history of conflict between two or more people or groups
c. Interdepartmental relationships that frequently place members at cross purposes.
d. Unreasonable levels of pressure and pace.
e. Severe economic downturn that jeopardizes job security.
f. Overly competitive climate fostered by top management.
g. Favoritism shown by managers to one or two employees.
h. Punitive or threatening style of managers which leads to blaming and shifting responsibility.
i. Unclear or arbitrary standards for advancement and promotion.
j. Overly secretive and competitive politics.

## IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

The conflict sources discussed above are from theoretical point of view, and are expected to apply in all organizations. However, different types of organizations may have their particular sources causing conflict. For example in an open-systems type organizations, where the external environment impacts the functioning of the organizations, the sources of conflict could be different from those in a closed-systems type of organizations. Also, in educational institutions where the products are human beings which do not have to be marketed like some other goods, the sources of conflict could be different.

Working with school superintendents, Loewen (1983) identified organizational structure, competence, and disagreements over goals, roles, and values as the sources of conflict for the superintendents. Organizational structure includes such factors as the size, the age, the specialization, the condition of the physical facility, the culture, and the decision making processes (Lindelow, 1981; Loewen, 1983; de Bono, 1986).

Boyd (1989), who studied elementary school teachers, identified problems with communication, power/authority issues, disagreements over values, goals, and resources as the main causes of conflict for the teachers.

Holder (1989), who worked with principals in Eastern Canada, found power/authority issues, procedures/processes to be followed, disagreements concerning teaching assignments, and poor job performance as the main sources of conflict for the principals.

Fris (1992), also working with school principals, identified differences in values, incongruent role expectations (including disagreements over moral and ethical standards of behavior), and disagreements over the particular methods followed to perform specific tasks, and disagreements over the distribution of limited resources as the main sources of conflict for the principals.

### IN HEALTH RELATED FIELDS

McIntosh (1992), who worked with community health nursing supervisors, reported issues of personal interests affecting the participants, change in roles of individuals, personalities, factors affecting goal achievements, differences in values, rules and regulations, task performances, and limited resources as the main sources of conflict for the nursing supervisors.

Eiserman (1993), who studied nursing administrators in Canadian community colleges and universities, identified ability to influence, evolving professional culture of nursing, distribution of resources, lack of group cohesiveness, information problems, attacks or perceived attacks on professional or personal integrity, faulty role performance or role expectation, incongruent ethical or moral values, attitudes and emotions, and gender issues as the main sources of conflict. A summary of sources of conflict is given in Table 1.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

There may be some variation in terminology, but it seems that there is quite an overlap in the sources of conflict for various types of organizations. However, there also seem to be some striking differences.

## ROLE OF POWER IN CONFLICT

One of the main causes of interpersonal conflict is the control of power. Power plays an important role in conflicts and it is difficult to ignore this important factor when studying conflict. Hocker and Wilmot (1985) believe that conflict cannot be studied to the exclusion of power. They argue:

> Power is necessary to move a conflict along to some kind of productive management. If people have no influence over each other, they cannot participate in conflict together. Power is central to the study of conflict and can be used for productive or destructive ends. In fact, we only have options about whether use of power will be destructive or productive for ourselves and our relationships. (pp. 71-72)

Hocker and Wilmot have also discussed some assumptions about power as follows:

a. Power is present in all social interactions.
b. Power is neither inherently positive or negative.
c. Power is a product of the interpersonal relationship, not of the individual.
d. Acts of power balancing are at the heart of conflict interactions, resulting in destructive or productive power use.

e. Productive power balancing can occur by an expansion of individual and relational power rather than by a struggle over winning a bigger part of finite power.

f. Individuals can have either too much or too little power to be able to manage conflict effectively. A relative balance is necessary for productive conflict management.

## SOURCES OF POWER

Hocker and Wilmot (1985) have identified the following sources of power: expertise, resource control (position power), interpersonal linkages, personal qualities, intimacy or friendship, etc.

Power is relation dependent i.e. P(AB) = P(BA) which means that the amount of power that A has over B depends upon the dependence of B on A. However, accurate assessment of power is difficult. But balancing of power is desirable to resolve conflicts productively. Hocker and Wilmot (1985) make the following comments about power:

> Accurate assessment of power remains difficult, even though researchers have tried to measure decision making and conversational control as indicative of power. Power can restore options for productive conflict management. Such techniques as limiting the power of the high-power party, empowering the low-power party and restructuring the conflict from win-lose to collaborative structures are desirable. (p. 73)

Thus, we see that power has a special place in conflict, and managers must keep the importance of power in mind when managing conflict.

## EFFECTS OF CONFLICT

Traditionally, conflict was thought to be destructive; and in fact, the results can be destructive if conflict is not managed effectively. However, if conflict is managed constructively, it can be quite constructive. Both the dysfunctional and the constructive aspects of conflict are discussed below.

### DYSFUNCTIONAL EFFECTS

Some scholars maintain that if conflict is not handled effectively and within a reasonable length of time, it results in unhealthy environment and has dysfunctional effects. For example, Lippitt (1982) warns us about the negative consequences of conflict as follows if it is carried too far, too long.

a. Diverts energy from the real task.
b. Destroys morale.
c. Polarizes individuals and groups.
d. Deepens differences.
e. Obstructs cooperative action.
f. Produces irresponsible behavior.
g. Creates suspicion and distrust.
h. Decreases productivity (p. 68).

Deutsch (1973) has also discussed some negative aspects of conflict which are very similar to those discussed by Lippitt.

## POSITIVE AND CREATIVE EFFECTS

Even though Lippitt (1982) warns us about the negative consequences of conflict, and seems to be in favor of reducing "unnecessary" conflict, he sees some positive values of conflict as well. Commenting on positive and creative values of conflict, Lippitt (p. 69) lists the following points:

a. Opens up an issue in a confronting manner.
b. Develops clarification of an issue.
c. Improves problem-solving quality.
d. Increases involvement.
e. Provides more spontaneity in communication.
f. Initiates growth.
g. Strengthens a relationship when creatively resolved.

Coser (1956) has also mentioned some similar positive aspects of conflict. A few additional aspects not covered under Lippitt are given below.

h. Loosely structured groups and open societies use realistic conflict to weld the constituent units together.
i. Conflict promotes transformations of social systems by altering all major structural relations, basic institutions, and prevailing values.
j. Conflict prevents rigidity and facilitates internal system reorganization by facilitating the innovation of elements.

## MODELS OF THE CONFLICT PROCESS

To conceptualize how conflict takes shape and what course it takes under different conditions, theorists and scholars have proposed different models of conflict.

### PONDY'S CONFLICT MODEL

Pondy (1967) advanced three models to explain conflict under different situations.

a. **Bargaining model**: covers conflict among various competing groups for scarce rewards.

b. **Bureaucratic model**: deals with differences or disagreements among superordinates and subordinates in an organization.

c. **Systems model**: covers the disagreements along the lateral dimensions of an organization. This model, also called **Pondy's Conflict Model**, will be discussed in detail below.

Pondy has identified the following six stages in the development of a conflict: Preceding aftermath, latent conflict, perceived conflict, felt conflict, manifest conflict, and conflict aftermath. (see Figure 1). The six stages are explained below.

a. *Preceding aftermath*: If a previous conflict had not been resolved to the satisfaction of one or more of the parties involved in the conflict, any further dissatisfaction of those parties over the same issues - no matter how minor - could rekindle their irritation and could start a new conflict.

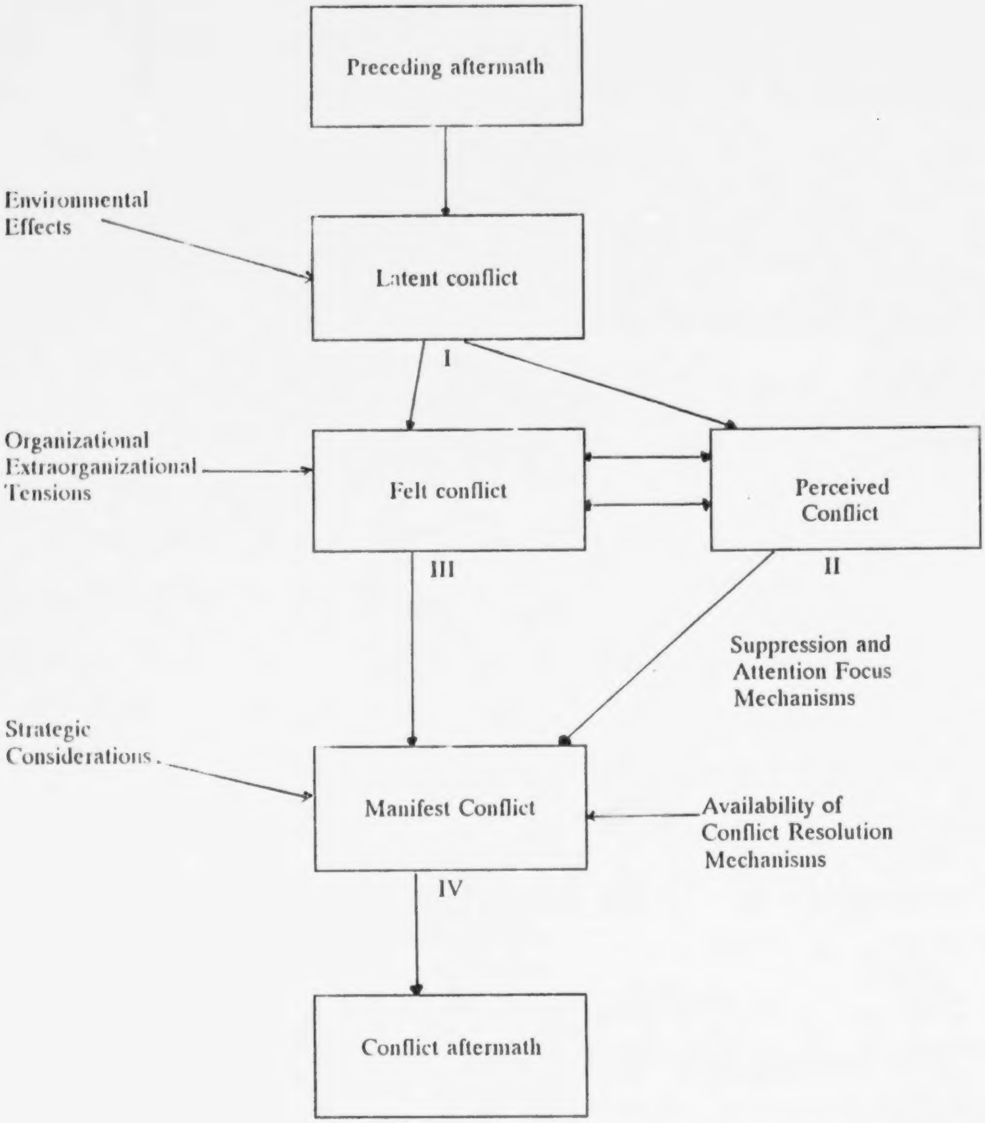
Preceding aftermath
Environmental Effects
Latent conflict
I
Organizational Extraorganizational Tensions
Felt conflict
Perceived Conflict
III
II
Suppression and Attention Focus Mechanisms
Strategic Considerations
Manifest Conflict
Availability of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms
IV
Conflict aftermath

*Figure 1 Pondy's Conflict Model*

Source: Pondy (1967)

*b. Latent conflict*: It develops from competition for scarce resources, drives for individual autonomy, or divergence of individual or organizational goals. At this stage, there are no visible signs of any conflict yet. Such conflicts are present to some degree in all organizations in one form or the other.

*c. Perceived conflict*: When individuals become extraordinarily sensitive to some aspect of latent conflict, conflict is said to be perceived.

*d. Felt conflict*: It is the next stage in the model. When individuals begin to feel the effects of perceived conflict on personal level, conflict is said to be felt.

*e. Manifest conflict*: When individuals begin to act in a way that they show their anger or otherwise aggressive behavior, conflict becomes manifest.

*f. Aftermath*: If conflict is not resolved to the satisfaction of all participants, and is suppressed, other conflicts may be aggravated and an explosion may result. The interfaces between perceived and manifest conflict, and felt and manifest conflict are the points where conflict resolution skills must be applied.

In essence, Pondy's model suggests that unresolved previous conflicts give rise to new conflicts, and outside factors such as environment and strategic considerations may impinge on conflicts at various stages. The model also indicates that conflicts are dynamic and the whole process is gradual. If conflicts are not resolved effectively, they perpetuate and end in negative feelings (pp. 296-320).

## THOMAS' MODELS

Thomas (1976) proposed two conflict models - the process model and the structural model (pp 894-897).

**Process model**: The process model is quite similar to Pondy's Conflict model and is shown in Figure 2. Conflict between two parties appears to unfold in a relatively orderly sequence of events and unless something intervenes, the sequence tends to be repeated in episodes. Each episode is highly dynamic, with each party's behavior serving as a stimulus to evoke a response from the other. Further, each new episode is shaped in part by the previous episodes. The aftermath could be constructive or destructive depending upon the way the conflict is handled.

**Structural model:** Whereas the process approach to conflict visualizes it as a sequence of events, a structural view tends to see it in terms of the conditions that influence behavior. There are a number of structural factors as discussed below in organizations that determine conflicts and their outcome (Owens, 1987, pp. 252-253).

a. Rules and procedures (written and unwritten, formal and informal) regulate behavior and could avoid or manage conflict, but could also cause or exacerbate conflict if they unreasonably complicate simple procedures.

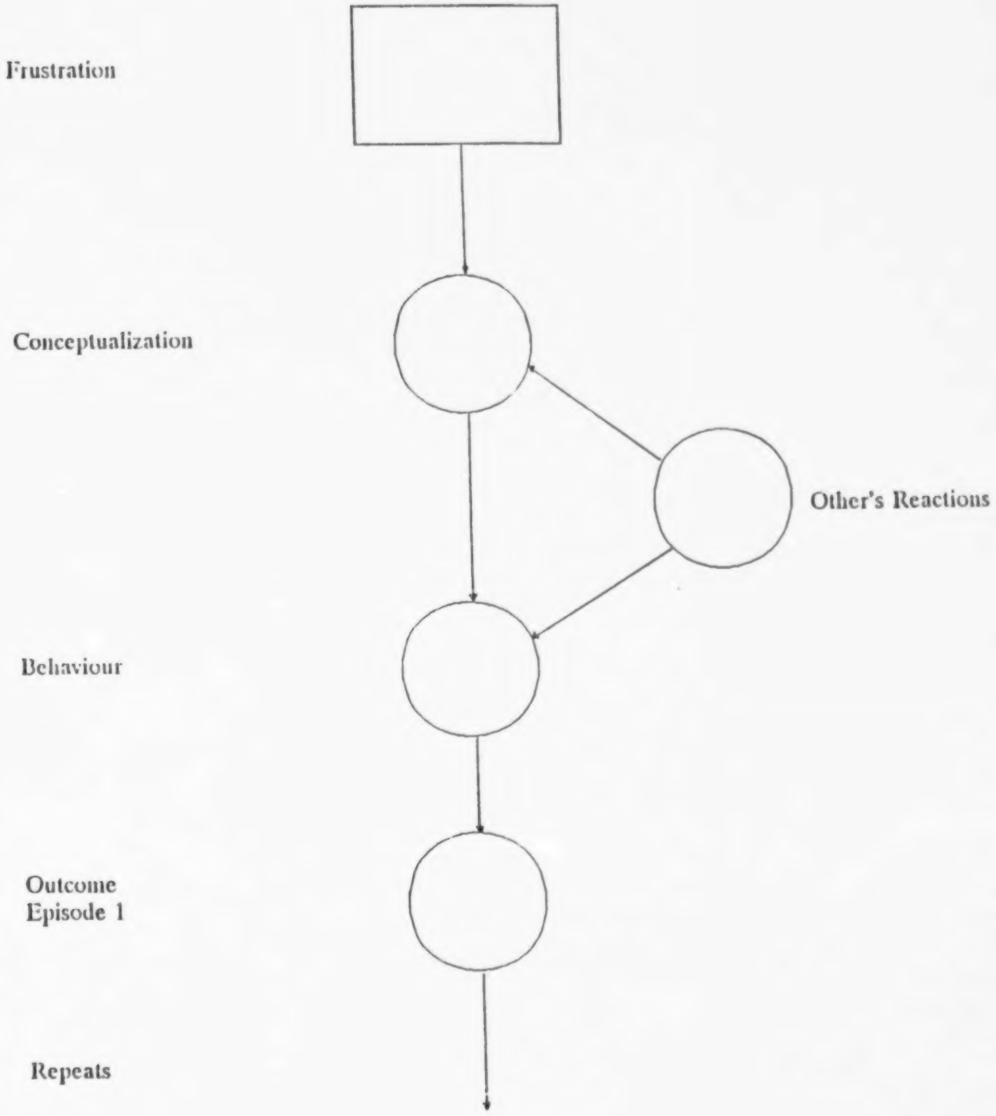
Frustration
Conceptualization
Other's Reactions
Behaviour
Outcome
Episode 1
Repeats

*Figure 2 Process Model*

Source: Thomas (1976, p. 895)

b. Personality predispositions. For example, in selecting new personnel, many managers hire people who seem to "fit in" the organization.

c. Social norms or social pressure of the organization. A culture that smooths over friction and frowns upon open challenges and questioning can make it very difficult to identify and confront conflict at all (pp. 250-252).

## OPEN SYSTEMS VIEW

Thus far conflict has been discussed entirely in terms of the internal functioning of organizations. However, organizations are open systems and are affected by their environments which in turn affect conflicts in them. Viewing conflict in organizations from the systems theory perspective, Hocker and Wilmot (1985, p. 131) comment, "The genius of systems theory as a framework for assessment and intervention is that it provides a way to understand conflicts by giving information about patterns, interlocking sequences, functions of the parties, and methods of processing information." Their view of conflict in systems is:

a. Systems operate as an interdependent unit with no villains, heroes, good and bad people, healthy or unhealthy members.

b. Each member gets labelled or programmed into a specific role in the system.

c. Cooperation is necessary among system members to keep conflict going.

d. Triangles tend to form in systems when relations are close and intense.
e. Systems develop rules for conflict.
f. The conflict serves a function for the system.

Lippitt (1982, p. 71), describes five stages of open conflict.

a. Anticipation. People anticipate a change and forecast problems.
b. Conscious but unexpressed differences. Rumors are out but there is no confirmation.
c. Discussion. Information is presented and questions asked.
d. Open dispute. Differing opinions become clear.
e. Open conflict. The conflict sharpens up.

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Management is no doubt the most important aspect of conflict because an ineffective management can lead to disastrous results whereas effective management of conflict can produce very positive results and could prove very healthy for an organization. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that a wealth of information is available on conflict management.

### MANAGEMENT STYLES

When a party is faced with a conflict, in almost all cases the instinctive response is to adopt a strategy to win (Owens, 1987). The most common approach to resolving conflict is the win-lose orientation.

**Win-lose orientation**

Commenting on the win-lose orientation as the response to a conflict situation, Likert and Likert (1976, p. 59) write:

> Confrontation, non-negotiable demands, and ultimatums have become the order of the day as *the* way of dealing with deep-seated differences. One party marshalls all its forces to compel the other party to do what the first has decided it wants. Confrontation is from a fixed position and seeks to mobilize the power to win. Win-lose strategy is used in a variety of situations.

Even though a win-lose orientation to conflict resolution is most instinctive, this does not mean that it is most effective. In fact, most theorists are of the view that this approach should be used only under special conditions where other approaches are ineffective. There are some serious negative consequences of this approach. Commenting on the negative consequences of this approach, Owens (1987) writes:

> The consequences of this approach are twofold:
> a. Between the parties to the conflict. Antagonisms deepen, hostility rises, hope of finding a mutually acceptable solution ceases.
> b. Within the groups involved. Spirits soar as members close ranks in preparation for battle. Differences of opinion, skepticism, and challenge of leadership or the "party line" are frowned upon: members are pressured to support the decisions taken, to conform, to "go along", to be loyal to the group or get out. . . . This not only hardens the group's position in the conflict itself but - more importantly - sets the stage for ineffective functioning of the group after the conflict ceases. (pp. 255-56)

Since the consequences of win-lose orientation to conflict are so deleterious, scholars and practitioners began to develop and suggest alternatives for conflict resolution.

**Conflict handling orientations**

Blake and Mouton (1964) developed the managerial grid, suggesting that conflicting parties may show some concern for the interest of the other party in addition to concern for their own interests. Depending upon the extent to which the parties show these concerns, they identified five conflict-handling orientations. Thomas (1976) changed the names of the orientations identified by Blake and Mouton and called them competitive, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborative.

The relationship between the orientations is given in Figure 3. A brief description of these orientations is given below.

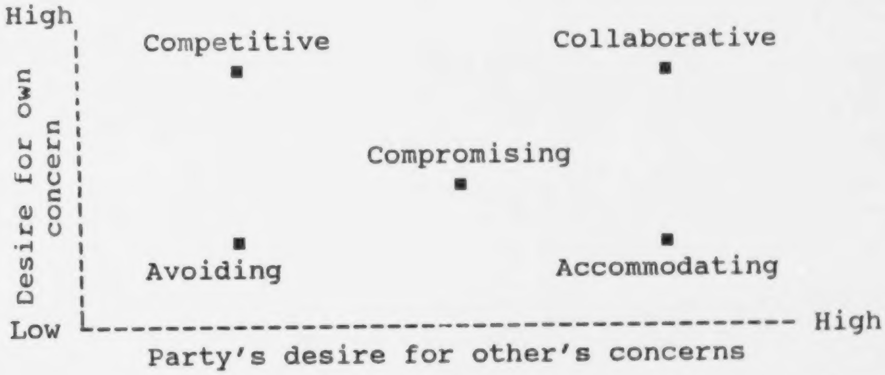
High
Competitive
Collaborative
Desire for own concern
Compromising
Avoiding
Accommodating
Low
High
Party's desire for other's concerns

**Figure 3. Thomas' conflict-handling orientations**

Source: Thomas (1976, p.900)

a. *Competitive* behavior is the search to satisfy one's own concerns at the expense of others if need be. It is the classic win-lose view of conflict.

b. *Avoiding* (unassertive-uncooperative) behavior is usually expressed by apathy, withdrawal, and indifference. This does not mean that there is an absence of conflict but it has been conceptualized as something not to deal with. Hence, the latent conflict remains and may be viewed differently at another time.

c. *Accommodation* is typified by appeasement. This orientation may be associated with a desire to maintain a working relationship even at some sacrifice of one's own interests.

d. *Compromising* (sharing) orientation often leads to compromises (trade-offs).

e. *Collaborative* orientation leads to efforts to satisfy fully the concerns of both parties through mutual problem-solving. This orientation is win-win (Owens, 1987, p. 260).

Hocker and Wilmot (1985) have discussed behaviors that characterize different tactics - avoidance, competitive, and collaborative:

**Avoidance tactics:** For example, the following are typical avoidance tactics.

a. simple denial
b. extended denial
c. underresponsiveness
d. topic shifting
e. topic avoidance
f. abstractness
g. semantic focus
h. process focus

i. joking
j. ambivalence, and
k. pessimism

**Competitive tactics:** The following behaviors characterize competitive tactics.

a. faulting
b. rejection
c. hostile questioning
d. hostile joking
e. presumptive attribution
f. avoiding responsibility
g. prescription, and
h. violence

**Collaborative tactics:** The following behaviors are indicative of collaborative tactics.

a. description
b. qualification
c. disclosure
d. soliciting disclosure
e. negative inquiry
f. empathy or support
g. emphasizing commonalities
h. accepting responsibility
i. initiating problem solving (pp. 116-121).

Thomas (1976) did not hold that one approach was better than another. He maintained that each approach could be effective under different situations. Bailey (1971) put it succinctly:

> Any administrator who assumes that he can use the same technique or style in resolving conflicts that emanate respectively from subordinate conflicts, superordinate conflicts, and lateral conflicts is either a genius or a fool. (p. 234)

## CONTINGENCY FACTORS

Appropriate use of the five approaches suggested by Thomas to manage conflict depends upon the situation. Each conflict situation requires its own approach. Cooze (1990) recommended that each of the five conflict-handling orientations could be applied successfully in different situations as follows.

**a. Competing (Forcing).** When there is a sense of urgency, when one must defend the "correct" position, when a superior-subordinate relationship is involved, and when the relationship between the administrator and the subordinate is not critical.

**b. Compromising.** When the issue and the working relationship are both of moderate importance, and when neither party can get what it wants.

**c. Accommodating.** When the goal is of little importance but a good working relationship is of paramount importance. However, the use of the strategy may contribute to low-quality decisions whose full implications may not be realized soon.

**d. Collaborating.** When issues are critical and good working relationship is important to both parties.

**e. Avoiding.** Appropriate when one's stake is not high, but the potential for damaging a critical working relationship is significant. The presence of time constraint usually enhances the adoption of this strategy; and in most cases, the damages (if any) are repaired by the mere effluxion of time (pp. 22-23).

Even though any of these orientations could be effective under different situations, most scholars believe that the collaborative or win-win orientation to conflict resolution is the most effective orientation, and recommend its use where feasible. However the win-win approach may not be applicable in all situations; some conditions must be met before this approach can be used. Different scholars and practitioners have made different suggestions to create suitable conditions for this approach to work. For example, stressing the importance of the collaborative approach, Hocker and Wilmot (1985) insist:

> The size of the 'pie' is not finite and can be increased; that is the belief underlying the collaborative approach. . . . Collaboration comes from a willingness to move with the other rather than against. . . . When in doubt, collaborate. (p. 121)

Gerstein and Reagan (1986) suggest that the following beliefs lead to win-win resolutions.

a. It is possible to solve problems.
b. I am powerful and adaptive, and do not need to argue.
c. Many things do work.
d. There are no dumb questions.
e. There is plenty of time.
f. It is impossible not to make a difference.
g. It is possible for every one to win.
h. It is possible to learn to trust ourselves and others.

Gerstein and Reagan (1986) also warn that there are beliefs that will lead to impasses to collaborative approach to conflict resolution. They caution us against the following beliefs:

a. It is impossible to solve anything.
b. This is my territory, I own this.
c. You can't expect too much.

d. Someone has to suffer.
e. Don’t ask dumb questions.
f. This cannot make difference.
g. You have to compromise.
h. There will always be winners and losers.
i. You cannot really trust anyone.

Besides these beliefs, there are technical hindrances as well which may thwart collaborative approach. Bolton (1979) lists the following factors:

a. Not handling the emotions first.
b. Not defining the problem properly.
c. Evaluating and clarifying during brainstorming.
d. Not working out the nitty-gritty details.
e. Not following up to see that the action steps are carried out.
f. Hidden agenda (pp. 244-45).

Kelly (1979, pp. 12) also believes that the following characteristics must exist for creative and effective collaborative approach.

a. Procedures exist for dealing with conflict which foster communication and interaction between individuals and groups.
b. Leaders are skilled in interaction process, e.g. group formation, group leadership, and group maintenance functions.
c. A climate of trust exists or is developed among individuals.

If the above characteristics do not exist, the approach may not work. Even when all the favorable conditions are present, it is not a guarantee that collaborative approach will work. The parties in the conflict have to approach the problem in such a way that it does work.

Hocker and Wilmot (1985, p. 102) suggest the following approach to manage conflict:

a. Separate the people from the problem. "We, working together, can solve this problem that is confronting us."

b. Focus on interests, not positions. Interests underlie the positions, but a position is a specific solution to an interest. If you start with a position, you will overlook many creative options for meeting the interests.

c. Generate a variety of possible options before deciding what to do.

d. Insist that the result will be based on some objective standard. One person's will is not enough to justify a conflict solution. Some principle of fairness or judgment should be used. Fair standards can be based on the following: market value, costs, precedent, court decision, scientific judgment, moral standards, equal treatment, efficiency, etc.

Lippitt (1982) has suggested a similar approach.

## GENERAL APPROACH

Borisoff and Victor (1989) suggest a five-step process for conflict management (p.3-16). The steps include assessment, acknowledgement, attitude, action, and analysis in that order.

**a. Assessment**: Provides each party with an initial understanding about the nature of the relationship, the course of the conflict, and the appropriate communication strategies used in addressing the differences. The parties should assess the points they are willing or unwilling to compromise. They should also assess what the other party wants. Each party should make a preliminary determination of the appropriate conflict-handling behavior for the situation, the relationship, and the environment.

**b. Acknowledgement**: Unless the parties are able to demonstrate an awareness, and to articulate fully the beliefs, goals, ideals, and personality traits, of the other party involved, it will be unlikely that the conflict can be handled productively. They should listen to the other party's concerns and try to understand their view point.

**c. Attitude**: The two above steps are not enough, it is also important that the participants demonstrate their willingness to engage in a mutually dependent exchange that includes rather than excludes the parties involved. One's attitude towards others becomes a crucial dimension in effective conflict management. Also, stereotyping and making predeterminations should be avoided. Parties should try to remain objective, flexible and as open as possible.

**d. Action**: Productive action should be taken towards achieving one's goals. The primary manifestations of action are in the participants' choice of verbal or nonverbal cues. The parties should watch their use of language and nonverbal communication. They should observe how the other party communicates verbally and nonverbally. They should stick to the issues, and the issues should not be presented in a win-lose situation or context. The parties should be sincere and trustworthy. They should use the conflict-handling behavior appropriate for the situation and be able to revise their behavior according to how the transaction progresses. They should listen, repeat, and clarify information.

**e. Analysis**: All parties' concerns should be articulated and considered. Decisions should be summarized and clarified, and procedures for implementing any changes should be reviewed.

## DEALING WITH AFFECT

Main And Roark (1975) suggested a five-step action plan as follows to reduce conflict for use by practising counselors.

a. Description of the situation.

b. Description of feelings and meanings.

c. Description of the desired situation.

d. Determination of necessary changes.

e. Outline of the agenda.

They have included examples of dialogues to clarify the steps. The action plan is said to have been used successfully by many counselors.

**PROBLEM SOLVING**

Frey and Young (1978) proposed an eight-step approach to managing conflict for use by educators. These authors claim that the process has been used successfully in a wide range of problem situations. The eight steps are:

a. Strength development: involves developing within oneself a firm idea of one's personal strengths and commenting on other's strengths in a genuine manner.
b. Trust building.
c. Accurate message sending and receiving.
d. Reality testing: Each person determines if the assumptions being made are valid.
e. Goal setting.
f. Generating alternatives.
g. Selecting alternatives.
h. Planning for implementation.

**PROVIDING STRUCTURE**

In response to complaints by some high school students, Bethel, Brennan, Lewis, and Singer (1978) devised a proposal to alleviate conflict in high schools from students' perspective. The seven-step proposal recommends:

a. Simplicity of written rules.
b. Student and teacher involvement in design and operation of rules.

c. Prompt, specific written responses.

d. Access to the procedures with freedom from reprisals.

e. Jurisdiction: the scope of most school problem-solving procedures currently in use is limited. Some deal with discipline, some exclusively with grades etc. The more constructive a role a procedure can assume in the operation of the school, the more easily it can attract supporters.

f. Neutral disinterested review.

g. Careful implementation: administrative leadership, training, orientation, and monitoring.

Like the authors of the other proposals, these authors also claim that the process has been utilized successfully in a wide range of problem situations.

Concerned with student conflict resulting in violence and vandalism, Reed and Avis (1978) recommended strongly that students be involved in the affairs of school that affect them and that a sense of community be built among them. They called their scheme CMSLP (Conflict Management Student Leadership Program). They had great faith in the working of their plan.

Sebring (1978) recommended improved bargaining processes to reduce conflict among teachers and school administrators resulting from power sharing. Margolis and Tewel (1988) prepared a guide for school administrators to deal with conflict with parents arising from the latter's anger on some issues. They recommended the following recipe for handling such conflicts:

a. Agree on a problem definition.
b. Analyze the problem.
c. Generate and select solutions.
d. Provide for evaluation and adjustment.

Almost all these steps are part of many other such recommendations.

## OTHER APPROACHES

In addition to the five conflict-handling modes identified by Blake and Mouton, by Thomas, and the contingency approaches discussed earlier, there are other approaches to resolving conflicts. Each approach has its own merits depending upon the nature of the conflict and the parties involved. Some of the additional important approaches are discussed next.

### Third party intervention

Hocker and Wilmot (1985, pp. 180-209) have discussed this approach in great detail. According to them, third party intervention is often needed to resolve a conflict by transforming the elements of conflict. This may be achieved by altering the power balance, changing the expression of conflict, changing the perception of scarce rewards, and so on. A competent intervener transforms the conflict so parties can solve it. Transformation of conflict elements can be achieved in a number of ways, including equalizing the power of the participants, altering their perceptions of one another's powers, and stopping an escalatory spiral of moves and countermoves. Also, superordinate goals can be invoked; for example "for the sake of children", "for the country", "for the human race", etc.

The GRIT (Graduated Reduction In Tension) technique involves a small, step-by-step reduction in tension, announced at each stage. Put briefly, if two people keep on behaving as if they trusted each other, their beliefs and attitudes tend to fall in line with their behaviors and principled negotiation approaches. Finally the intervention is assessed and the intervener gets out.

**Arbitration**

It is another type of third party intervention and comes into use when the participants mutually empower a third party to decide the outcome of their conflict. An "interest" arbitration focuses on a simple limited contract issue such as benefits or seniority.

**Bargaining**

This special approach to conflict resolution is discussed by Schellenberg (1982). He considers bargaining to occur when (i) two parties face each other in a mixed-motive situation (i.e. with significant potential common interests as well as conflict of interests), (ii) both parties consider it possible that some agreements or understandings might be reached which could leave them better off than if such an agreement is not reached, and (iii) they enter a process of discussion including the consideration of proposals and counterproposals in search of some commonly agreed upon solutions (p. 203).

Negotiations and bargaining are roughly synonymous; however, negotiation puts more emphasis on the process of conferring, and bargaining connotes more attention to the underlying structure of interests and how it may be modified through agreement.

There are three stages of labor-management negotiations:

a. Establishing the positions.

b. Exploring the strengths and weaknesses of the positions.

c. Reaching a conclusion.

Schellenberg (1982, 205-207) discusses four various features of bargaining - distributive, integrative, attitudinal structuring, and intraorganizational.

- **Distributive bargaining**: The closer a solution is to one party's position, the greater must be the sacrifice of the other party - a direct conflict of interest. Each party attempts to manipulate the negotiations so that the conclusion will come as close as possible to its own preferred position - leaving the other side to make most of the concessions.
- **Integrative bargaining**: This refers to the process of resolving problems of mutual interest. On some specific issues the two sides may have common or complementary interests, and negotiations may help the parties decide how these can best be pursued.

- **Attitudinal structuring**: This refers to the influence negotiators exert on the thinking of each other. Without being able to convince the other side of the importance of one's own needs, it is difficult to get a favorable settlement. However such convincing may not be positive all the time and may lead to antagonism and an impression of bad faith.
- **Intraorganizational bargaining**: This refers to the process by which each side comes to its own set of proposals initially, as well as the process by which new positions are accepted during the course of negotiations. Since only a few representatives take part in negotiations, it is important to keep the rank and file informed from time to time to gauge the support or opposition to the possible outcomes. This process of checking with the membership at large is called intraorganizational bargaining.

## FORCE AND COERCION

Schellenberg (1982), and Owens (1987), both discuss coercion as a possible approach to end a conflict under some special conditions. Commenting on the effectiveness of coercion as a conflict-resolving approach, Schellenberg writes:

> The use of force or coercion can be effective to resolve a conflict especially when governments or police are involved. . . . Coercion does not necessarily require either force or violence or even an implied threat of force. Effective authority can rest upon other bases. Coercion can occur through

> simple obedience to authority especially if the persons involved see no other choice as effective available.
>
> When force is used to resolve conflicts, it must
>
> a. Have sufficient capability.
>
> b. Force must have credibility, i.e. the receiving party must believe that sufficient force will be used if conditions are not met. However, if force is actually used, it loses efficiency.
>
> c. Force must also be relevant in two ways:
> i. it must be relevant in the sense that it can drastically affect, in a negative way, persons with real power, and
> ii. in the sense that it helps these persons make the associations and draw the conclusions necessary to be coerced.
>
> d. Finally there is legitimacy of force which has three aspects:
> i. legitimacy in the eyes of those who may exercise physical force,
> ii. to those upon whom the force is used,
> iii. to the others who may observe the events (people at large, international community, etc.) (pp. 246-250).

Owens (1987) seems to be very cautious in recommending the use of coercion to resolve conflicts. He writes, "In this view, coercion leads to a conflict-hostility-resistance syndrome within the organization, very unlike the synergistic, creative, problem solving culture that characterizes effective organization" (p. 254).

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

### ATTRIBUTIONS

Sillars (1976) drew the attention of the parties in conflict to the role of attributions, and cautioned that the parties be aware of the salience of attributions in conflict management. Stressing this point, he wrote:

> People's ability to resolve conflict may be affected by attribution. . . . Because of close association between attributions and communication, there seems to be little promise of resolution without moderation of

> the parties' attribution. . . . Attributions are highly salient in conflict. According to Thomas' (1976) definition of conflict, attributions of causality, intent, and personality constitute conflict, as well as indicate what type of conflict is present and what effective means of resolving conflict are available.
>
> People rely on attributions about other people to decide how to handle conflict. . . . Attributions partly determine whether the actor decides to retaliate, seek conciliation, avoid the other person, or pursue some other mode of resolution. However attributions are notoriously biased, so the actor's strategy may be based on inaccurate or exaggerated assumptions about the other person. Therefore attributions may contribute to an individual's ineffectiveness in handling conflicts (pp. 279-280).

Sillar's (1976) study of the roommates in a dormitory at the University of Wisconsin showed that the conflicting-handling strategies of the students were strongly correlated to the attributions they had about their roommates.

**Nonverbal Language (Communication)**

Borisoff and Victor (1989) also emphasize the importance of the role which nonverbal communication can play during conflict management. They caution that nonverbal languages must be carefully used so as not to offend the other party in any way. They define nonverbal communication as, "the exchange of information through nonlinguistic signs", and sign as, "a stimulus which, for some communicator, stands for something else" (p. 64).

**Types of nonverbal communication**: Borisoff and Victor identified the following five types of nonverbal communication: appearance, kinesics, oculesis, haptics, and proxemics. The types along with their functions are explained briefly as follows.

a. *Appearance*: Mere physical appearance communicates message.

b. *Kinesics* (body language). It serves five basic purposes:

   (i) Emblems: Nonverbal messages that a receiver can transmit directly into words. For example, raising of the middle finger in North America is unambiguously a sign of insult, but other cultures could use this to convey a very different meaning.

   (ii) Illustrators: are movements that complement verbal communication by describing, accenting, or reinforcing what the speaker says.

   (iii) Affect displays: Nonverbal messages of the body and face that carry an emotional meaning; for example smile, frowning etc.

   (iv)Regulators: Are nonverbal messages that accompany speech to control or regulate what the speaker says; for example, nod of the head. Regulators play some part in conflict management.

   (v) Adaptors: are movements used to fulfil some personal need, for example, scratching.

c. *Oculics* (eye contact): serves four main purposes.

   (i) Cognitive are eye movements associated with thinking.

(ii) Monitoring are eye movements associated with the receiving of responses to what the speaker has just said.

(iii) Regulatory are eye movements associated with the willingness of or unwillingness on the part of the communicator to respond to what has been said; for example the absence or presence of direct eye contact.

(iv) Expressive oculesis are associated with the emotional response of the communicator; for example, disgust, anger, happiness, or sadness.

d. *Haptics*: Communication through body touching behavior; for example, hugging, kissing, and patting.

e. *Proxemics*: The way in which people use space separating them communicates a message. For example a space of about half a meter indicates closeness, and a space of about a meter indicates a casual personal relationship (pp. 64-80).

Borisoff and Victor warn us that people from different back grounds may be using body language in different ways, and may interpret very different meanings than the intended which may further compound a conflict situation. So, we should be very careful in the use of nonverbal language. Having discussed a variety of conflict-management models and others approaches available in the literature, it would be interesting to find out if chairpersons use these approaches to manage conflict or not.

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

### IN HIGHER EDUCTION

Despite all the proposed models of conflict and effective conflict-handling tactics, individuals do not seem to follow the theoretical approach in most cases. They seem to have developed their own styles to deal with conflict. Hocker and Wilmot (1985) describe this reality in the form of the following assumptions:

a. People develop patterned responses to conflict. Many times they develop two or even three styles in response to different situations.

b. People develop coflict styles for reasons that make sense to them.

c. No one style is automatically better than another.

d. Even though most people have preferred styles, their styles undergo changes in order to adapt to the demands of new situations.

Although not much information by way of conflict handling strategies is available on educational institutions, some researchers have reported the results of their studies in which they have identified strategies used by actors to deal with conflict.

Carroll (1974) reported the results of his study on conflict as perceived by chairpersons of university departments; but his study was limited to the following four categories of conflict: intrasender, intersender, interrole, and person-role, and to six major areas of decision making that gave rise to conflict. Carroll did not study conflict management i.e. strategies used by chairpersons to manage conflict.

Sillars (1976) reported the results of an investigation which he conducted on the roommates of a dormitory at the University of Wisconsin and found out the strategies that the students used to handle interpersonal conflict with their roommates. He identified three major categories and five subcategories. The subcategories were further divided into fifteen minor categories as follows:

**A. Passive-indirect strategies**

I. Nonstrategies

- a. Letting the issue resolve itself
- b. Empathetic adjustment. Understanding develops between the parties and the problem is resolved without explicit attempts to communicate.
- c. Disregarding the issue as being unimportant.

II. Avoiding Strategies

- a. Avoiding the issue
- b. Avoiding the person

III. Indirect Strategies

- a. Hinting
- b. Setting an example. The partner is expected to follow the actor's example
- c. Joking

**B. Distributive strategies**

I. Non-coercive Compliance Gaining

- a. Requesting
- b. Demanding
- c. Persuading

- II. Coercive Compliance Gaining
    - a. Aggressive emotion. For example insults, slurs, profanity, yelling, anger etc.
    - b. Threat aversion. Punishment is threatened or carried out.

**C. Integrative strategies**

- a. Disclosure. The actor provides and elicits information to facilitate understanding of perceptions, feelings, and reasons for behavior. But no problem solving.
- b. Problem solving

The major categories are explained below.

A. Passive-Indirect: Actors minimize explicit acknowledgment of and communication about conflict.

B. Distributive: Actors engage in explicit discussion that promotes individual over mutual outcomes, by seeking concessions, or starting a negative evaluation of the partner.

C. Integrative: Actors engage in explicit discussion that does not seek to elicit concessions and sustains a neutral or positive evaluation, and thus promotes neutral outcomes.

Loewen (1983) reported the following 12 tactics used by school superintendents in Saskatchewan to manage conflict.

- a. Information control.
- b. Information distortion.
- c. Information channels.
- d. Rules and regulations.
- e. Reward control.
- f. Denigration.
- g. Coalition formation.
- h. Coalition destruction.
- i. Withdrawal.
- j. Stalling for time.
- k. Naivete.
- l. Environment control.

Working with school principals in Canada and New Zealand, Fris (1991 & 1992) identified and compared the strategies used by them to manage conflict in the two countries. He found out that the principals use the following main categories of strategies.

a. Manage information (base).
b. Cultivate (use) allies.
c. Censure behavior.
d. Concede/accede.
e. Be assertive
f. Cover your butt (safeguard interests).
g. Separate conflictuants (get rid of problem people; shift responsibility).
h. Buy time.
i. Manage climate.
j. Mollify.
k. Establish order.

In a study done on school teachers Boyd (1989), reported that women teachers compromised more often than they engaged in collaborative problem solving. Holder (1991) also working with school principals found out that most of them used one or more of the following major strategies to manage conflict.

a. Informations exchange.
b. Coercion.
c. Negotiation.
d. Intervention.

## HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

Some research has been done on conflict management in the field of nursing or other health related areas. For example Woodtli (1987) reported the results of a study that she carried out to find out the sources of conflict as perceived by the deans of nursing, and their conflict-handling modes. She provided a list of 25 possible sources of conflict and asked the deans of nursing in Florida universities to identify three most and three least disruptive sources of conflict, and one or more of the five modes - accommodative, collaborative, competitive, compromising, and avoiding - they used to manage the different types of conflict. Her study did not break down the conflict-handling modes into narrower categories as identified by some others.

For example Demo (1986), Gibson (1986), Formisano (1987), Evans (1991), Growe (1991), Noble and Rancourt (1991), and Ward and Price (1991) all have reported that administrators use one or more of the following strategies to resolve conflict. Most of the above researchers have studied health related fields.

a. Collaboration.
b. Controlling.
c. Following a model.
d. Individualizing and flexibility.
e. Empowerment.
f. Deference.
g. Avoidance.
h. Negotiation.
i. Truthfulness.

Most of these terms have already been explained somewhere else, the ones which have not been explained before will be explained next.

Controlling: This broad category includes confrontation and competition approaches. Competition is the same as win-lose orientation.

Following a model: Some models to handle conflict have been discussed earlier. Actors may decide to use any of those models to manage a conflict.

Individualizing and flexibility: means that the individuals are assured that their jobs would be protected so that they don't have to worry about their jobs.

Empowerment: involves acknowledging, and fostering the positive qualities of individuals to build and enhance their self-esteem and capabilities with the expectation that they will be partners in building a great organization where conflicts are resolved collaboratively.

Deference: means to show respect for authority. In case of nurses, they need to show respect for doctors while dealing with conflicts so that they can be handled in a positive climate.

More recently, McIntosh (1992) studied the conflict management strategies of community health nursing supervisors and reported that they used the following ten major categories of strategies.

a. Manage knowledge.
b. Tackle the issues.
c. Demonstrate affect and values.
d. Anticipate.
e. Pause and ponder.
f. Control.
g. Defuse the situation.
h. Use logical consequences.
i. Nurture coalition and cooperation.
j. Dodge.

Each of the above categories was further divided into subcategories with the result of a total of 42 strategies.

Eiserman (1993) studied conflict-handling strategies used by administrators of nursing programs in Canadian community colleges and universities. The strategies identified by her included the following main categories:

a. Exercising control
b. Fostering collaborative problem solving
c. Managing affect
d. Managing climate
e. Managing information
f. Seeking support
g. Protecting yourself

This section is concluded by listing the strategies identified in the literature to manage conflict. The list is taken from Fris (1992).

### CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IDENTIFIED IN THE LITERATURE

### FRIS (1992)

a. Manage information
b. Manage coalitions
c. Appeal/adhere to norms
d. Back off
e. Reward, punish
f. Force
g. Launch personal attacks
h. Deal with affect
i. Protect personal interests
j. Control the environment
k. Manage time
l. Establish rapport, mollify, mend fences
m. Maintain order

## VALUES

The influence of values in administration, and hence in conflict management, has already been discussed in chapter 1. Various definitions of "values" were also discussed there. It is also being recognized more and more now that individuals without clear values cannot function effectively even in their everyday life. Commenting on the importance of clarifying values for individuals Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1978) wrote:

> The theory recognizes that many people today have difficulty "putting themselves together." Decisions seem too complicated, pressures seem too varied, changes seem too unsettling. As a consequence, some people flounder in confusion, apathy, or inconsistency. They cannot get clear on their values. They cannot find life patterns for themselves that are purposeful and satisfying.
> If we succeed in clarifying values for them, the theory asserts that results will show up as changes in behavior . . . .. (p.4)

According to them, people with the following characteristics lack clarification of values.

a. Apathetic, listless, uninterested people.

b. Flighty people who are interested in many things, but only for fleeting moments.

c. People with extreme uncertainty.

d. Inconsistent people. Those involved in many things that are mutually inconsistent if not mutually destructive.

e. Drifters. Planless and unenthusiastic drifting from this to that.

f. Overconformers. Many choose to conform, accommodating themselves as best as they can to what they perceive to be the dominant viewpoint of the moment.

g. Overdissenters. Chronic nagging, complaining, and irrational people. Overdissent is, of course, no more independent of others than is overconformity

h. Poseurs or role players. People who cover their lack of clarity about the meaning of their lives by posturing in some role that is no more real for them than a cardboard image e.g. the class clown or the bully on the block. Each poseur adopts a counterfeit existence to conceal the lack of a real one (p. 7).

Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1978) also believe that people's values go through a growth process, and that personal values may change:

> People grow and learn through experiences. Out of experiences may come certain general guides to behavior. These guides tend to give direction to life and may be called VALUES. . . . since we see values as growing from a person's experiences, we would expect that different experiences would give rise to different values and that any one person's values would be modified as those experiences accumulate and change. . . . As guides to behavior, values evolve and mature as experiences evolve and mature. . . . Values seldom function in a pure and abstract form. Complicated judgments are involved and true values are ultimately reflected in the outcome of life as it is lived. (p. 26)

Rokeach (1977) too was concerned about the clarification of values for people. Stressing the importance of values he wrote:

> These assumptions also represent a set of reasons for arguing that the value concept, more than any other, should occupy a central position across all the social sciences - sociology, anthropology, psychology, psychiatry, political science, education, economics, and history. (p. 222)

Strike, Haller, and Soltis (1988) advocate that all administrators, particularly the school administrators, should have good moral ethics (values), and emphasize that administrators and educators should impart moral education to their students so that they are responsible and caring persons. They wrote:

> In our view, growth as a moral agent, as someone who cares about others and is willing and able to accept responsibility for one's self, is the compelling matter. Promoting this kind of development is what teachers and administrators ought to be fundamentally about, whatever else it is that they are about. As educators, we are first and foremost in the business of creating persons. (pp. 83-84)

## NATURE OF VALUES

Discussing the nature of values, Hodgkinson (1978), made a distinction between facts and values. It was generally accepted that facts were verifiable (Simon, 1965). Questioning this generalization, Hodgkinson (1978), wrote:

> But surely some private unverifiable statements are also facts. The pain in my tooth can never be experienced by anyone but myself, yet it is a factual proposition in the observable world of my dentist and affects the way in which he operates. . . . The world of fact is *given* and the other, the world of value, is *made*. . . . Values can never be true or false. Values are facts of a kind. They are concepts. They are subjective. They occur only in the head. (pp. 104-105)

Describing the nature of human values, Rokeach (1977) listed five assumptions about values:

a. The total number of values that a person possesses is relatively small.
b. All men everywhere possess the same values to different degrees.
c. Values are organized into different systems.
d. The antecedents of human values can be traced to culture, society and its institutions, and personality.
e. The consequences of human values will be manifested in virtually all phenomena that social scientists might consider worth investigating and understanding (p 222).

Rokeach further added that:

a. A value is enduring. Any conception of human values, if it is to be fruitful, must be able to account for enduring character of values as well as for their changing character.
b. A value is a belief upon which a man acts by preference.
c. A value refers to a mode of conduct or end-state of existence which correspond to instrumental and terminal values respectively. Two kinds of terminal values are: personal, and social; and two kinds of instrumental values are: moral, and competence.
d. A value is a preference as well as a "conception of the preferable".
e. A value is a conception of something that is personally or socially preferable.

Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1978) maintain that a value must satisfy all the seven criteria listed below. If all of the seven criteria are not satisfied, it cannot be a value, it may be a belief or an attitude only. The criteria are:

a. Choosing freely.
b. Choosing from alternatives.
c. Choosing after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative.
d. Prizing and cherishing: The values we are defining have positive tones. We prize a value, cherish it, esteem it, respect it, and hold it dear.
e. Affirming: We are willing that others know of our values.
f. Acting upon choices: We may form friendships or join organizations that nourish our values. We may spend money on values.
g. Repeating: Values tend to be persistent. They tend to show up as a pattern in life (pp. 27-28).

In a similar vein, Francis and Woodcock (1990) require that a clarified value must meet the following eight conditions:

a. Values must be chosen from alternatives.
b. Values must be consistent with each other.
c. Values must be limited in number.
d. Values should be actionable.
e. Values should enhance performance.
f. Values must be attractive and pride giving.

g. Values should be capable of being communicated.

h. Values must be written down.

With respect to organizational values, Francis and Woodcock (1990) discussed the following characteristics of values:

a. Confrontation and debate are essential in order to eliminate impractical values. The members of the top team should determine what they think are the current values within the organization.

b. Implementation policies should be devised which include communication strategies to cascade the message downward.

c. Management values are detected most clearly by looking at resource decisions - a small fortune spent on decorating the director's carport and nothing spent on the workers' squalid washroom says everything - no matter what pious statements are made.

d. Values tend to come from the top - but not always. Trade unions shape some values. Values that come from below are sometimes productive.

e. There are no objective tests to measure the soundness of a value. Debate, reflection, experiment and conscience are essential.

f. Values are decided in the "head" and the "heart" meaning that the top management cadre must be deeply involved (pp. 35-37).

## TYPES OF VALUES

Hodgkinson (1983) classified values into three types - Type I, Type II, and Type III, and defined the three types as follows.

**Type I,** the highest level of values, are transrational; they go beyond reason. They imply an act of faith or intent or will as it is manifested in the acceptance of a *principle*. For example, adultery is wrong.

**Type II** values are justified upon the general ground of rationality. For example, use of certain fluorocarbons is wrong because it destroys the ozone layer.

**Type III** values are the lowest level of values, and they are determined by simple personal preference. For example, someone prefers tea to coffee (pp. 37-41).

Cohen (1985), identified the following seven types of values:

**a. Intrinsic value**: The value a state or condition of being has in itself. For example health, pleasure, autonomy, freedom, love, and virtue.

**b. Extrinsic value**: The value an activity or state of affairs has because of the intrinsically valuable things to which it will or may lead. For example the making of money, or some activities conducive to health (going to a dentist and having a cavity filled).

**c. Use value**: The value a physical object has because some use it has or can have. For example a car, a tool, a pen etc.

**d. Inherent value**: The value a thing has because the experience of thinking about it, or perceiving it, is intrinsically valuable. For example the thought of money to a miser.

**e. Moral value**: The value an action has when considered from the point of view of someone interested in doing what is moral. For example keeping a promise, or telling truth.

**f. Personality value**: The value which persons have as persons or as moral agents. For example when people are said to be "virtuous", "righteous", "praiseworthy" etc.

**g. Epistemic value**: The value that an act of believing has when considered as an act of truth-seeking. For example value terms such as "reasonable", "warranted", "justified".

Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey (1960) identified the following five categories of values: theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political, and religious (p.118).

Spindler (1963) claimed that people's values undergo change or growth with time and position in the society. He developed two main categories of values - traditional and emergent. He further divided each category into subcategories as follows:

A. Traditional values

- puritan morality
- work-success ethic
- individualism
- achievement orientation
- future time orientation

B. Emergent values

- relativistic morals
- sociability
- consideration for others
- hedonism
- present time orientation
- conformity to the group

Working with school systems, he found out that board members held more traditional values, while the values of the students and the younger teachers were more emergent. The values of the older teachers and the school superintendents were in between.

## SPECIFIC VALUES

Ever since the influence of values on the behavior of individuals was recognized, researchers began to identify the values held by individuals and by groups of people in organizations. This field of research attracted quite a few researchers who have identified values held by individuals and by groups of people.

Morris (1956) developed a typology of values as follows:

A. Social restraint and self-control.
B. Enjoyment and progress in action.
C. Withdrawal and self-sufficiency.
D. Receptivity and sympathetic concern.
E. Self-indulgence (or sensual enjoyment).

Lipset (1963) conducted a study to unravel the values of people in a democratic society like America. He found that people had the following as their dominant values: personal achievement, universality, specificity, ascription, elitism, and particularism.

Osborn, Hunt and Jauch (1980) identified the following as some of the dominant American values. The motto/implication of each value is also included

a. Individualism: The secret of American greatness.
b. Initiative: People can be trusted if let alone to guide their conduct wisely.
c. Democracy: The ultimate form of living together.
d. Goal attainment: Everyone should attempt to be successful.
e. Family orientation: The family is the basic institution of the society.
f. Equal opportunity: America is the land of opportunity and all people should get a fair chance.
g. Academic achievement: Education is important in itself.
h. Scientific orientation: Science is good and the road to development.
i. Justice: The American judicial system ensures equal treatment.

Morgan (1986), listed the following seven "spiritual" values of Japanese industry: national service through industry, fairness, harmony and cooperation, struggle for betterment, courtesy and humility, adjustment and assimilation, and gratitude.

Quoting one of the executives of the Mitsubishi Motor Company, Morgan wrote, "It seems silly to Westerners but every morning at 8:00 a.m., all across Japan, there are 87,000 people reciting the code of values and singing together. It is like we are all a community" (p.115). That is how important the values are to nations.

More recently, Francis and Woodcock (1990) identified the following 12 values for industrial organizations.

a. Managers must manage.
b. Cream at the top.
c. Performance is king.
d. Doing the right things (effectiveness).
e. Doing things right (efficiency).
f. Exercising frugality.
g. Who cares, wins.
h. Putting together (team work).
i. Justice must prevail.
j. Know thy enemy (the organization is aggressive in defense of its own actions).
k. Survival of the fittest.
l. Who dares wins (the organization seizes opportunity as it occurs).

Discussing the ethics (values) of the school administrators, Strike, Haller, and Soltis (1988), posited two main moral principles - the principle of benefit maximization, and equal respect for persons. Based on these two issues, they advocate the following values for the school administrators:

a. Freedom of expression
b. Equal time
c. Individual freedom and public interest
d. Equal educational opportunity
e. Democracy
f. Due process. They define due process as requiring the administrators to make reasonable decisions by following rational procedures that generate reliable evidence and consistent judgments.

Francis and Woodcock (1990) designed a 60 item questionnaire to identify one or more of the following 12 values. The values deal with the following organizational issues:

1 Managing management:
  a. Power  b. Elitism  c. Reward
2 Managing task:
  d. Effectiveness  e. Efficiency  f. Economy
3 Managing relationships:
  g. Fairness  h. Team work  i. Law and order
4 Managing climate:
  j. Defense  k. Competitiveness  l. Opportunism

## VALUE ORIENTATIONS OF EDUCATORS

Hodgkinson (1970) studied the value orientations of teachers, vice-principals, and principals of schools to determine if there was a correlation between the value orientations of individuals and their role expectations. He compared them on 12 value dimensions, and found that the teachers differed from the principals and the vice-principals on four of the twelve values. From his observations, he concluded that values appeared to shift as role incumbents move through the ranks of an organizational hierarchy.

Rokeach (1979) studied professors of education and school administrators for their value orientations. He gave them a list of 36 values - 18 terminal, and 18 instrumental - and asked them to rank them in the order they cherished them. The four most important values identified by Rokeach were sense of accomplishment, self-respect, wisdom, and freedom.

The complete list of Rokeach's values is given in Table 2.

Lambert (1980) used a combination of concepts taken from Padfield's (1979) instrument and Sjorgren's (1969) instrument to study the values held by male and female administrators in education and teachers in P.E.I. Lambert's instrument contained 69 items. She classified each individual into one of the following four categories.

**a. Pragmatists**: evaluate things on the basis of whether something will work, and if it will be successful.

**TABLE 2.**

**List of values identified by Rokeach**

| **Terminal** | **Instrumental** |
|---|---|
| A comfortable life | Ambitious |
| An exciting life | Broad-minded |
| A sense of accomplishment | Capable |
| A world at peace | Cheerful |
| A world of beauty | Clean |
| Equality | Courageous |
| Family security | Forgiving |
| Freedom | Helpful |
| Happiness | Honest |
| Inner harmony | Imaginative |
| Mature love | Independent |
| National security | Intellectual |
| Pleasure | Logical |
| Salvation | Loving |
| Self-respect | Obedient |
| Social recognition | Polite |
| True friendship | Responsible |
| Wisdom | Self-controlled |

**b. Moralists**: evaluate in terms of whether something is right or wrong.

**c. Affective**: Individuals evaluate importance in terms of whether something is pleasant or not.

**d. Mixed orientations**: occur when an individual cannot be clearly placed into any of the other three categories.

Her findings revealed that all groups were relatively similar in their value orientations. Overall the primary value orientation of the groups was "ethical-moral" with fewer individuals as "pragmatic". The female administrators were more "pragmatic" than either the male administrators or the female teachers.

Between-group comparisons of the "operative values" scores revealed that male and female administrators differed significantly on 27 concepts. From the findings it was concluded that the concepts relating to value systems of female and male administrators and female teachers showed significant differences when tested within certain areas, and were extremely similar when tested in other areas.

Working with elementary and secondary school principals, Ashbaugh and Kasten (1984) determined the values held by the principals and identified three main categories of values - personalistic, organizational, and transcendent.

**Personalistic values** are expressions of a highly idiographic nature, and reflect the personal preferences of the individuals. For example, "I prefer to work with small groups rather than with large ones."

**Organizational values** seem to be based on organizational norms, systems concerns, and professional ethos. For example, "Decisions in this institution are made by people who are affected by them."

**Transcendent values** are based less on personal experience and organizational norms and more on broadly based codes of behavior. These convictions have a universal or general equality and may be rooted in philosophy or religion. For example, "Teachers in this institution are hired without any discrimination based on color or creed."

Personalistic values were sub-divided into three categories - personal style, human relations, and nature of schooling. Similarly, Organizational values were further divided into three categories - organizational operations, professional group behavior, and professional norms. Samples of statements are given below to clarify each value type.

1. Personalistic:
   a. I'm not democratic. (Personal style)
   b. The longer I go, the more I see the need to compromise. (Human relations)
   c. Is this something I would expect a teacher of my kids to do? (Nature of schooling)

2. Organizational:
   a. Policy should mean what it says. (Organizational operations)
   b. Weak teachers are unfair to strong teachers. (Professional group behavior)
   c. What's good for kids was the basis of my decision. (Professional norms)
3. Transcendent:
   a. The question must be decided for the good of others. I would choose the group over the individual.

Ashbaugh and Kasten (1986) interviewed some school superintendents to determine what values were influencing their administrative behavior. The base of their interviews was the five areas of organizational belief identified by Schein (1985) as follows:

a. Relationships between the organization and the environment
b. The nature of reality and truth
c. The nature of human nature
d. The nature of human activity
e. The nature of human relationships.

In this study, Ashbaugh and Kasten identified the following values:

a. Commitment to the importance of education.
b. Preference for action.
c. Acceptance of several criteria of verifiability.
d. Belief in rationality.

e. A tendency to personalize their relationships with their school districts and clientele.

## DEALING WITH VALUE CONFLICTS

Quite often value judgments lead to conflicts. For example the statement, "We need more pulp mills in Alberta" could cause disagreements among a number of people. If there is a conflict arisen from a value judgment, it can be resolved following Meux's (1971) six recommendations. His recommendations along with some examples of clarifying statements are given below.

a. Reducing differences in the interpretation of the Value Question. Perhaps the first thing the two actors should do is to be sure that they are considering the same value question.

b. Reducing differences in the Purported Facts Assembled. Be sure that the actors have all 'factual' assertions here, and not any evaluative assertions. Any statement like 'undesirable' or 'effective' or 'adequate' is not a factual assertion.

c. Reducing differences in the Asserted Truth of Purported Facts. Examine the *evidence* for the truth of the purported fact. Some rules of evidence may not be very logical. For example weight may not be necessarily directly proportional to the height.

d. Reducing differences in the Relevance of Facts. Much value conflict stems from the differences between persons in the relevance of given fact, or in the relative emphasis on each of a set of facts. These differences have little or nothing to do with the assessed truth of facts. For example the fact that DDT requires greatly increasing doses to kill the insects may not be relevant to some people.

e. Reducing differences in the Tentative Value judgments. Another source of conflict might be in coming to a tentative value judgment too quickly or making it too general. In such a case a general value judgment may be split into 2 or more specific value judgments. For example, "Although you disagree about whether DDT is good (a general value term), you may agree that DDT is cheap and practical (both specific value terms), but still disagree on whether DDT is safe (a specific value term)."

f. Reducing differences in Testing the Acceptability of Value Principles. Such differences are reduced by increasing the base of considerations and experiences common to the two persons in the tests of their principles.

So, whenever we are faced with a conflict rooted in value differences, we can use Meux's recommendations to resolve such differences.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research paradigm and the techniques used to collect and analyze data. The chapter will also include a description of the pilot study, ethical considerations, and justification of the methodology.

As briefly discussed in chapter 1, the objectives of this study were to find (1) the sources of conflict (2) the strategies used by the chairpersons to manage conflict (3) the values held by the chairpersons which underlay their strategies to manage conflict, and (4) if the strategies used were related to the sources of conflict. The review of available information (Chapter 2) showed that very little research has been reported on the subject of conflict management in educational settings, though a large number of studies has been done in non-educational fields. Research on values is much more scarce, and almost nonexistent on academic chairpersons in colleges.

The nature of this study was analytic, descriptive. Interviews were the only source of data collection and, for the most part, they were loosely structured. Flanagan's (1954) "critical incident technique" was used to collect data. No hypothesis was tested, and there was no a priori theory. All findings were grounded in the data; and categories for both the conflict management strategies and for the values emerged from the inductive analysis of the data. This qualitative research design falls in the naturalistic paradigm of research as described by Eisner (1981), Guba and Lincoln (1981), Lecompte and Goetz (1982), Owens (1982), Fetterman (1988), Berg (1989), Borg and Gall (1989), Strauss and Corbin (1990), Elliot (1990), and others. Discussing the differences between scientific and artistic (naturalistic) research paradigms, Eisner (1981) espoused similar ideas when he wrote:

> Scientific research may be regarded as inquiries that use formal instruments as the primary basis for data collection, that transform the data collection into numerical indices of one kind or another, and that attempt to generalize in a formal way to some universe beyond itself.
>
> Artistic approaches to research are less concerned with the discovery of truth than with the creation of meaning. What art seeks is not the discovery of laws of nature about which true statements or explanations can be given, but rather the creation of images that people will find meaningful and from which their fallible and tentative views of the world can be altered, rejected, or made more secure. Truth implies singularity and monopoly. Meaning implies relativism and diversity.

More on this subject will be discussed later.

The present study was not intended to determine whether all chairpersons use the same strategies to manage conflict under similar conditions, but rather to determine how chairpersons assessed conflicts in their own settings and what strategies they used to manage those conflicts. Each chairperson may use a different strategy to manage similar conflict. In other words, there may not be one "reality"; indeed there may be as many realities as the number of chairpersons interviewed. So the focus of the study was on the "meaning" of conflict as experienced by various chairpersons. To some chairpersons a given conflict may be something very serious and a cause for panic requiring an immediate attention for its management, and they may spend a lot of time and energy to manage that conflict in their own ways; for others a similar conflict may be something very mundane, and they may even ignore it or may manage it in very different ways.

## PILOT STUDY

A pilot study was undertaken in May 1992 in which three chairpersons of academic departments from different colleges in Alberta took part. The chairpersons were interviewed using Flanagan's (1954) "critical incident technique" as discussed in detail by Stano (1983). Questions were asked only to seek clarifications on the issues of interest. The interviews were transcribed and content analyses were done following Miles' and Huberman's (1984), and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) techniques. The analyses resulted in the identification of strategies used by the chairpersons to manage conflict. Although no direct questions about values were asked in the interviews, some clarifying and probing questions yielded data from which values held by the chairpersons could be inferred, and patterns of values began to emerge.

The pilot study proved so successful that its findings have been included in the results of the main study. The pilot study also proved very helpful in sharpening interviewing skills.

## DELIMITATIONS

The study was delimited by the following factors:

(a) Only one Alberta college was the focus of the study.

(b) Interviews were the only source of data.

(c) The interviews were conducted in one time period - September 1992 to February 1993.

(d) No attempt was made to analyze data by gender, experience, qualifications, race or ethnicity etc. of the participants.

## LIMITATIONS

The findings of the study will be limited in their generalizability because of the following factors:

(a) Because only one college was the focus of the study, the findings may not apply to other colleges with different environmental or contextual factors.

(b) Since interviews were the only source of data, and since there was a big, albeit reasonable, assumption that the chairpersons would describe the conflict episodes as honestly as possible, and that they would be able to recall all events correctly, the findings may not be widely generalizable.

Nonetheless, as we are dealing with a group of chairpersons, and the findings of the group rather than the individual chairpersons are reported, the findings will still make reasonable contribution to the field of conflict management.

## DATA SOURCES

A public college in a medium-sized city in Alberta was selected as the site for the study. All the available chairpersons - former and present - took part in the study. Selection of all the chairpersons eliminated any selection bias, particularly the elite bias. There were 9 females in the sample. Since the findings of the pilot study have also been included in the final report, in total the study included 26 chairpersons. Detailed descriptions of the site and the participants cannot be provided because the respondents were assured of anonymity. However, some further descriptions of the context are provided later.

The selection of a single college was made on the following grounds:

(a) Like most other public colleges in Alberta including those in bigger cities, this college offers a variety of programs including university transfer, business, fine arts, nursing, academic upgrading and so on. So in terms of program offerings, the college is a good representative of colleges in Alberta.

(b) The college has more than twenty years of history and is therefore well established, and thus has chairpersons with a wide range of experiences. So in terms of experience, the chairpersons provide a very representative sample. Also, the college had not recently experienced any unique problems - environmental, external, or internal - which might be different from the other colleges.

(c) This college has not been the site of very many research studies. Particularly, the chairpersons as a group have not been the subject of any study before; therefore, the chairpersons at the college do not have that experience of responding to interviews in some special way. In other words, they do not suffer from "history" and "maturation" biases (Borg and Gall 1989).

## DATA COLLECTION

The chairpersons were interviewed in their offices to provide a familiar, comfortable, and relaxed environment for them. Machovec (1989) considers this important. The interviews were semi-structured. Each chairperson was asked to describe two episodes of conflict - one, which in their judgment was handled successfully, and the other which was not handled so successfully. This technique of seeking information is based on Flanagan's (1954) critical incident technique which has been described in detail by Stano (1983). Questions were asked of the chairpersons to seek clarifications on the episodes. Those questions were focused and were kept short and simple. Some additional questions were also asked to get deeper information.

## EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING

Machovec (1989) recommended the following seven steps for effective interviewing.

**(a) Mining**. Obtaining initial information using simple brief open-ended questions. Do not interrupt and ask more specific questions. Avoid words of reassurance and wait out the pauses.

**(b) Refining**. You now ask to go over the event again, this time in detail. Ask specific questions now focusing on details.

**(c). Retrogression**. Now proceed backwards from the most recent memory of the event. This step deeply probes factual recall.

**(d). Cross-section**. After mining, refining, and retrogression, go into quick deep thrusts into important areas.

**(e) Reliving**. If possible, go to the scene of the incident to recall anything missing (this step was omitted in the present study).

**(f) Refocus.**

**(g) Review and conclusion.**

Machovec's recommendations proved very useful, and enabled the researcher to collect very rich data which provided great breadth and depth to the subject. The interview schedule is included in Appendix A.

The interviews, which lasted between an hour and an hour and a half, were tape recorded. Even though Strauss and Corbin (1990, pp. 30-31) recommend selective transcribing - i.e. not all interviews need to be transcribed - verbatim transcripts of all the interviews were prepared including even the adjuncts such as "you know", "uh", "uhm" etc. to get deeper meanings of the responses. The transcripts ranged between 8 to 23 pages, but most of them were about 16 pages long. Five chairpersons could not think of conflict episodes which they had not handled successfully (for which they were not satisfied with their conflict-handling strategies). But one chairperson described three episodes. Thus 48 conflict episodes were described in all. The interviews spread over six months - from September 1992 to February 1993. The transcripts were taken back to the chairpersons for verification of the accuracy of the contents. Very few changes were required.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed and coded following Miles and Huberman (1984), Berg (1989), and Strauss and Corbin's (1990) approaches. Berg, and Strauss and Corbin discuss three types of coding - open, axial, and selective.

### OPEN CODING

Open coding is the analytic process by which concepts are identified and developed in terms of their properties and dimensions. Open coding may be done line-by-line, phrase-by-phrase, by the sentence, or even a paragraph (Strauss and Corbin, pp. 72-73).

## AXIAL CODING

A set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. In simple words, it is the procedures by which a major category is related to a number of similar subcategories. Categories which reflect basically the same idea are grouped together under a supracategory.

## SELECTIVE CODING

The process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development (Strauss and Corbin, p. 116). Miles and Huberman (1984) label open coding as first level coding, and axial coding as pattern coding.

Even though some axial coding was done, for the most part the analyses were restricted to open coding only for the pilot study. The same process was carried over into the main research. Transcripts were prepared as soon after each interview as possible (3 or 4 days on the average) and were taken back to the chairpersons for verification. After every four or five interviews analyses were carried out and the categories were constantly refined. The first three analyses, not including the pilot study, were sent to three university professors in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Alberta for their comments/guidance. Following their comments, categories and subcategories were refined further. The process was continued with every four or five interviews until all interviews were analyzed. This process has been labelled as "constant comparative method" by Strauss and Corbin. Miles and Huberman (1984) also recommend data analysis during data collection as an effective process.

> We believe that collecting data for months and not analyzing them is a serious mistake. It rules out the possibility of collecting new data to fill in gaps, or to test new hypotheses that emerge during analysis. It also reduces the quality of work produced. . . . Analysis during data collection lets the field worker cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new - often better quality - data, it can be healthy corrective for built-in blind spots; and it makes analysis an on-going, lively enterprise that is linked to the energizing effects of field work (p. 49).

The data were analyzed for types or categories of conflict management strategies and values. The typologies were refined several times.

Finally, the analyses of the interviews of four chairpersons who had masters or doctorate degrees in educational administration or other social sciences were taken back to them and they were requested to comment on the analyses. In each case the agreements were between 90 to 95%.

## JUSTIFICATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine the sources of conflict that the chairpersons have to deal with, the strategies used by them to manage conflict, and the values that underlie conflict-handling strategies. Since individual chairpersons faced different sources of conflict depending upon the nature of their departments, and since each chairperson was a unique individual, they might have been using different strategies to deal with similar conflicts. The nature of the departments could be very different depending upon the size, the technology used, the complexity, the characteristics of the faculty, and so on. Thus the strategies used by the chairpersons might have been influenced by contextual factors. Also, the chairpersons might not have been using a single strategy to deal with a given type of conflict; they may be using different, or even a number of different strategies at the same time. Thus much variation was expected in the use of strategies for similar situations. In other words, multiple realities were expected rather than just one. Also, no particular strategies were expected, i.e. there was no a priori theory. When we are looking at multiple realities rather than one, the most appropriate research design is a qualitative study.

In addition, because values were another important focus of the study, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to design a non-qualitative research design which will allow a researcher to identify values. An instrument will have to be designed that lists all the conceivable strategies and all the possible values - not an easy job. Even if such an instrument were designed, the strategies and the values listed on the instrument would be those of the researcher and not necessarily the actual strategies used by the chairpersons who might be using some other strategies not included in the list. Besides, some people can describe what they do but find it difficult to put labels on their actions. Also labels have different meanings to different people. So, a non-qualitative design for the study was found less appropriate. In the approach used, the chairpersons were not forced to make choices of strategies from a given list. They simply narrated their lived experiences. It was up to the researcher to dig deep into the data to illuminate the meaning.

Owens (1982) supports naturalistic methodology for studies which are context bound:

> In the real world, events and phenomena cannot be teased out from the context in which they are inextricably embedded, and understanding involves the interrelationships among all of the many parts of the whole. . . . Qualitative methods - which emphasize both inner and outer knowledge of man in his world - are preferable. Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to get close to the data, thereby developing the analytical, conceptual, and categorical components explanation from the data itself.

## TRUSTWORTHINESS AND RIGOR

Guba and Lincoln (1981) proposed the following terms for qualitative studies to replace the corresponding terms in quantitative (or scientific) studies.

| Aspect | Scientific Term | Naturalistic Term |
|---|---|---|
| Truth Value | Internal Validity | Credibility |
| Applicability | External Validity/ Generalizability | Fittingness |
| Consistency | Reliability | Auditability |
| Neutrality | Objectivity | Confirmability |

### CREDIBILITY

Sandelowsky (1986) defines credibility for qualitative studies as follows:

> The truth value of a qualitative investigation generally resides in the discovery of human phenomena or experiences as they are lived and perceived by subjects, rather than in the verification of a priori conceptions of those experiences. (pp. 29-30)

The chairpersons narrated stories of some conflict episodes. Those descriptions were the lived experiences of the chairpersons, and were in no way characteristic of the measuring device. Also, there was no a priori theory to be tested or anything like that; the findings were grounded in the data. Using Sandelowsky's (1986) standards, the findings of the study should be credible. Sandelowsky goes on to say:

> A qualitative study is credible when it presents such faithful descriptions or interpretations of a human experience that people having that experience would immediately recognize it from those descriptions or interpretations as their own. A study is also credible when other researchers or readers can recognize the experience when confronted with it after having only read about it in a study (p. 30).

As far as faithful descriptions of the chairpersons' narratives are concerned, the transcripts of all the interviews were taken back to the respective chairpersons for verification of the accuracy of the contents. For accuracy of the findings, analyses of three interviews were sent to three university professors for their comments. Further analyses were done in the light of their suggestions. The research supervisor was consulted on a regular basis for advice and comments. This regular consultation with the research supervisor fulfilled the requirement of "peer debriefing" to enhance the credibility of the study. Peer debriefing is one of the ways recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to enhance credibility of a study.

Also, analyses of four verified transcripts were taken back to the respective chairpersons to determine if the findings reflected their strategies accurately or not. Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider the verification of the accuracy of transcripts and the findings by the members as an important means to ensure credibility. They have labelled this step as "member checking".

**Triangulation** is another important means to enhance the credibility of a study. Triangulation can be achieved in many ways (Guba and Lincoln 1981, Bogdan and Biklen 1982, Miles and Huberman 1984). Miles and Huberman (1984) maintain that among other methods, triangulation can be achieved by using a variety of informants. In the present study triangulation was achieved to some degree by using multiple perspectives of chairpersons. For example, female chairpersons, chairpersons who took part in the pilot study, and the chairpersons belonging to minority groups could be considered as having different perspectives because they were not a part of the "typical team". So, in a way triangulation has been achieved to some degree because of the muliple perspectives.

Credibility was also enhanced by avoiding some biases that threaten credibility (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). As already discussed elsewhere in this chapter, "history and maturation" biases were avoided by the selection of this particular college as the study site. The "elite" bias was avoided by selecting all the available chairpersons as the sample for the study. "Going native" bias was avoided by spending only as much time with the chairpersons as was needed to get all the information. The avoidance of these crucial biases contributed significantly to the credibility of the study.

**FITTINGNESS**

Guba and Lincoln (1981) question the claim of generalizability even for scientific studies because all studies are carried out under some special conditions which include environment, contextual factors etc., and which will likely be different in different situations. So, wide generalization is usually tenuous. They maintain that the results of any study dealing with human beings cannot be perfectly generalizable. The possibility of generalization is even more difficult for qualitative studies because that is not their main objective. So, Guba and Lincoln recommend the term "fittingness" for qualitative studies to replace generalizability. They profess:

> Evaluators ought not to think in terms of generalizations that have some kind of enduring truth value, rather they ought to think in terms of working hypotheses and of testing the degree of fit between the context in which the working hypotheses were generated and the context in which they are to be next applied. Fittingness rather than generalization is the naturalist's key concept (pp. 119-20).

Based on Guba and Lincoln's concept of external validity, Sandelowsky (1986) recommends the following test for fittingness:

> A study meets the criterion of fittingness when its findings can "fit" into contexts outside the study situation and when its audience views its findings as meaningful and applicable in terms of their own experiences. In addition the findings of the study . . . "fit" the data from which they are derived. The findings are well grounded in the life experiences studies, and reflect their typical and atypical elements. (p. 32)

Sandelowsky is not alone in making such a judgment. Her views are shared by Schofield (1990) as well.

> A consensus appears to be emerging that for qualitative researchers generalizability is best thought of as a matter of "fit" between the situation studied and others to which one might be interested in applying the concepts and conclusions of that study. This conceptualization makes thick descriptions crucial, since without them one does not have the information necessary for an informed judgment about the issue of fit. (p. 226)

The latter part of Sandelowsky's test was met by developing the categories grounded in the data. Typologies of conflict management strategies and of values were developed from the data. Also, since all the available chairpersons were included in the sample, all typical and atypical experiences were automatically included in the data, thus meeting the requirements of fittingness as laid out by Sandelowsky. To satisfy the first part of the test, the context of the study is explained next.

**Context**

The college which was the site of the present study was started in the late sixties as a part of the Government of Alberta's scheme to make post secondary education available in smaller cities as well. So the college is situated in a medium-sized city in Alberta. It offers university transfer programs in most subject areas, and some other programs as well which include business, computer systems technology, academic upgrading, nursing, early childhood training, and some industrial and technical programs. It operates some satellite campuses as well. Like many other colleges in the province, this college also saw a large expansion in its facilities.

And like most other colleges in the province, recently it had to bear the pains of severe budget cuts, but fortunately it managed to survive with only a few faculty positions abolished. The College Board has been very supportive of the college administration, and has rarely interfered without just cause. There is a body called "College Foundation" which has the responsibility to raise money for other college needs not including the salaries for the staff. So, the college has not been the subject of some unusual environment or circumstances.

The chairpersons were interviewed during the college hours and during the academic sessions, which means that they were interviewed on site so that they could describe their lived experiences effectively.

The stay of the researcher at the college was long enough that all the chairpersons came to know him well. So when the interviews were conducted, the researcher was not an outsider any more. This fact minimized any researcher effects which is one of the main threats to validity (LeCompte and Goetz, 1986; and Borg and Gall 1989). At the same time, the researcher was careful to keep his distance from the chairpersons so as not to go native thus avoiding another threat to validity.

Having explained the context, and having taken most of the steps to achieve generalizability, it will be appropriate to mention Wolcott's (1990) views on validity (generalizability). "Validity neither guides nor informs my work. What I seek is not unrelated to validity, but 'validity' does not capture its essence and is not the right term" (p.136). He goes on to say:

> What criteria are relevant to guide and judge our work so that the unique contribution can be retained and nurtured rather than reformed and assessed according to standards developed within and appropriate to other approaches. A preoccupation with validity may be as much a distraction to our collective efforts at qualitative research as it most certainly would be for me individually were I to set my course by it. That is not to dismiss validity but to attempt to put it into some broader perspective. (pp. 147-48)

Validity is not the prime concern to Wolcott.

## AUDITABILITY

Sandelowsky (1986) defines reliability for quantitative studies as follows:

> Reliability in quantitative research refers to the consistency, stability, and dependability of a test or a testing procedure. A reliable test is one that yields the same or comparable results every time it is administered to the same or comparable subjects; and when it has homogeneous items (internal consistency). (p. 32)

To Guba and Lincoln (1981), consistency for naturalistic inquiry is not even an issue because such a study aims at multiple realities rather than at one, and because a naturalistic inquirer may be more interested in differences rather than in similarities. They also argue that, "since it is impossible to have internal validity without reliability, a demonstration of internal validity amounts to a simultaneous demonstration of reliability. Hence, if an evaluator places emphasis on shoring up validity, reliability will follow" (p. 120). So reliability is viewed as a necessary precondition for validity. However Guba and Lincoln concede that "consistency of a naturalistic study is more difficult to establish than that of a scientific study" (p. 124).

Also Guba and Lincoln recommend the use of the term auditability as more appropriate than reliability for naturalistic studies. Sandelowsky (1986) makes the following comments about auditability:

> A study and its findings are auditable when another researcher can clearly follow the decision trail used by the investigator in the study. In addition, another researcher could arrive at the same or comparable but not contradictory conclusions given the researcher's data, perspective and situation. . . . Also reliability in the quantitative sense often undermines validity in the qualitative sense because quantitative researchers believe in one reality that is characteristic of the group and not of the testing instrument and hence can be replicated. But qualitative researchers believe in multiple realities. (p. 33)

She further clarifies her comments as follows: "Auditability is achieved when the researcher leaves a clear decision trail concerning the study from its beginning to its end. Very simply, it means that any researcher can follow the progression of events and understand the logic" (p. 33).

Wolcott (1990) makes the following suggestions to achieve reliability (auditability)

a. Talk little. Listen a lot
b. Record accurately
c. Begin writing early
d. Let readers "see" for themselves
e. Report fully
f. Be candid

g. Seek feedback
h. Try to achieve balance
i. Write accurately

Wolcott's suggestions lead to the same recommendations as made by Sandelowsky. Following the recommendations of both, auditability for the present study was achieved by describing the methodology and the research design used for the study in as much detail as possible. Sample source, data collection, data analysis, and the context of the study have been explained in detail. Wolcott's suggestions were followed as closely as possible throughout the study.

**NEUTRALITY: CONFIRMABILITY**

Sandelowsky (1986) discusses neutrality as follows:

> Neutrality refers to the freedom from bias in the research process and product. In quantitative research, objectivity is the criterion of neutrality and is achieved when reliability and validity are established. In contrast, Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest that confirmability be the criterion of neutrality in qualitative research. Confirmability is achieved when auditability, truth value, and applicability are established. . . .
>
> From the perspective of qualitative inquiry, scientific objectivity is itself a socially constructed phenomenon that produces the illusion of objectivity. No rules or protocol can change the fact that there is no way to study a thing without changing it. Any study and its findings are at least as much a reflection of the investigator as of the phenomenon studied. . . . Confirmability, as the criterion of neutrality in qualitative research, refers to the findings themselves, not to the subjective or objective stance of the researcher. (pp. 33-34)

Using the above criteria for qualitative studies, neutrality for the present study seems to have been achieved because as already discussed, every effort was made to achieve credibility, fittingness, and auditability (Guba and Lincoln's criterion) for the present study.

# CHAPTER 4

# FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

# CONFLICT SOURCES AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

There were four main objectives of this study: (1) To identify the sources of conflict (2) to identify the strategies used by the chairpersons to manage conflict (3) to identify the values held by the chairpersons which underlay their strategies to manage conflict, and (4) to investigate any relationship between the sources of conflict and the strategies used. Conflict management strategies and sources of conflict will be reported in this chapter, in the same order. Values will be reported in Chapter 5, and any relationship between the sources of conflict and the strategies will be reported in Chapter 6.

## STRATEGIES

The conflict management strategies identified in this study have been categorized, and are summarized in Table 3. Most strategies have sub-categories which are more or less related to the main category. Also, some strategies have elements which require that such strategies be placed in more than one category; however, they are placed in categories where their most salient elements seem to belong. The strategies are reported in the order in which they emerged, and not necessarily in the order of their decreasing frequency. They are explained below and supported by excerpts wherever possible.

## TABLE 3

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

1. **PREVENTING OR CONTAINING CONFLICT**
   Being sensitive to the needs of the people
   Providing support; displaying friendly behavior
   Exploring alternatives; being consultative
   Confronting the issue: Warning/clarification of acceptable behavior/roles/issues/goals/norms, etc.

2. **INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**
   Gather information to get to the root of the problem
   Share information
   Informing superordinates

3. **STRENGTHENING OWN POSITION FOR IMPENDING ACTION**
   Seek information on the opposing party
   Organizing coalitions
   Gathering/preparing evidence against the opposing party
   Covering own butt

4. **COERCING**
   Threatening with legal action
   Using formal power
   Showing disapproval/anger; blaming the other party

5. **TRANSFERRING RESPONSIBILITY TO OTHERS; FOLLOWING RULES**

6. **MEDIATING**
   Providing guidance
   Bringing parties together

7. **BIDING TIME**
   Non-action
   Avoiding hasty and possible irrational actions
   Avoiding the issue

8. **DISSIMULATING**

9. **COMPROMISING**
   Accepting some blame or responsibility
   Accepting some demands of the other party

10. **UTILIZING PROFESSIONAL HELP TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR**

11. **BEING ASSERTIVE**
    Resisting any pressures
    Exercising control

12. **SEPARATING THE CONFLICTUANTS: MANIPULATING THE ENVIRONMENT**

## 1. PREVENTING OR CONTAINING CONFLICT

Even though the ultimate objective of all strategies is to resolve or end a conflict, this category covers the measures that the chairpersons took to prevent a conflict from arising or from escalating soon after it had surfaced so that it did not become a full-blown problem. This category has been divided into four main sub-categories as follows.

A. Being sensitive to the needs of the people.

B. Providing support; displaying friendly behavior.

C. Exploring alternatives; being consultative.

D. Confronting the issue: Warning/clarification of acceptable behavior/roles/issues/goals/norms, etc.

### A. Being sensitive to the needs of people

Chairpersons show a sensitivity to the needs of the people they deal with, and they do so by being sympathetic, open, and pleasant. They allow enough lead time for them to make plans or some adjustments as necessary. They also listen to the people carefully and with an open mind. Their approach is pleasant and non-threatening. They make people feel comfortable when they are dealing with them. It may include some manipulation of physical settings as well.

> (Chuck). And I went to her office and listened to her request. The instructor was very upset. She was emotionally disappointed. And I listened to what she had to say and why. . . . I listened; I did not jump in right away with my defense mechanisms that were starting to rise in me. I started to explain to her by apologizing . . . I just tried to reassure her that if there was something wrong there that she perceived as

> being wrong, that wasn't the case. I wasn't doing it on purpose, and I would try to rectify that. I did follow it up with making some changes in the physical setting.
>
> (Peter) What I was able to do was to be open with them in terms of sharing with them the more holistic understanding. . . . That at the same time I wasn't abandoning their position either. . . . It was that openness and candor - by being open and sensitive to both sides - I was able to take them through a tense kind of time.
>
> You have to watch being sensitive. I don't think a chairperson will be successful who is not sensitive - who cannot feel what other people are feeling.

**B. Providing support; displaying friendly behavior**

Chairpersons tend to be supportive of their colleagues where such support can avoid potential conflict situations or reduce some conflicts. Such support may be in the form of financial help, or simple encouragement. They display a friendly behavior and tend to be predictable thus avoiding any surprises. They may also provide some advice or guidance to their colleagues or students on how to deal with the present conflict (or potential conflict). They take extra care in making certain that while discussing a conflict situation with the people involved in the conflict, they concentrate on issues only and do not attack personalities in any way.

> (Bob). We believe very strongly in the fact that people in this organization, or in any organization do not respond very well to surprises. So, if you believe that, you buy into that, what you have to do then is to reduce the element of surprise. Now to reduce the element of surprise means that you get to introduce the issue that may prove to be the conflict point or the bottle neck, early up . . .. If you are wise and you wanted to reduce the potential conflict, you would start talking about the issue, if you like, no later than three months or possibly four months in advance of the actual deadline.

> (Stuart). In the second year, to avoid you know, potential problems with the calibre of the students, we had reduced the work load of this instructor from fifteen to ten hours per week with only one prep - the same course taught twice. But still the student evaluations returned were essentially poor for both groups. I then approached the faculty member and said, " Look, uhm, you are doing reasonably well, but unfortunately there are still some people who feel that the things can be improved."

**C. Exploring alternatives; being consultative.**

A majority of chairperson seemed to be consultative in their approach to find solutions to conflict situations. They would explore alternatives in search of some workable solutions which would be acceptable to the opposing party as well.

> (Chuk). I said to the instructor, "Oh, I am sorry that this has happened this way, and doesn't look like I can do anything about it. But uh, I will go to the Dean and make a plea, and do what I can to see if he can find some more funds to meet your needs because you feel it is absolutely necessary". So, I think it was resolved very well in the sense that the Dean was sympathetic to the situation and was able to allocate whatever funds were necessary to meet the need. It wasn't a large sum of money.

> (Fred). I thought, "Oh, my God, I have a problem. This has to be done by Wednesday. . . . I have to get this thing approved - something approved". And then I just put on my thinking cap and I said, somehow, somewhere we have to find some bucks, or go through less pain or do something because this is a problem. I could not find a solution. So we went back to the identical players, had another meeting twenty four hours later, and I said to this group of people, "Since you are clearly upset and you know the constraints we have, do you have any suggestions?" Their only suggestion was, "OK, we cut the options".

### D. Confronting the issue: Warning/clarification of acceptable behavior/roles/issues/goals/norms etc.

Most chairpersons choose to confront the issue (not the individual) as the first step to deal with a conflict situation. Misgivings, if any, with the opposing party are cleared. Often, the conflict is resolved at that stage. Sometimes a conflict situation arises simply because individuals are not aware of their obligations and behavior. They may not even be aware that their behaviors or actions are in conflict with some other party. So the chairperson brings the problem to the attention of the party and in some cases consequences of the behavior are also explained. Often a simple clarification of the issues or the behavior results in a resolution or a containment of the conflict. A warning may have to be given to the noncomplying party to bring the party in line.

> (Vic). I confronted her with it specifically and said, "Look this is a situation where your approach to doing things - your standards, what you are used to - has a direct conflict with what we are trying to do. For the changes we're trying to make, you are the only one who is doing this. Now uh, let's talk about this". And we did talk about it. I think she did not recognize in a clear fashion that this was a viable way of dealing with the problem. And I did this on one-to-one. It wasn't public. I did that in her office. So she was on her most comfortable ground. I did not call her to my office, I went to her which I think was important. Even now from this great distance in time I can say it worked.

> (Bill). When I got involved as the chairperson, I went to the faculty member and handed her the signed statement of the person who was using the office then replacing the sabbatical individual, and I confronted the member with it. The member got very red in the face, very embarrassed.

> (Patricia). So I had a meeting with the students and with all the instructors who taught them. And when it was pointed out that it was affecting their (the students') health - some of them had health problems like lack of sleep, upset stomach, and so on - when it was pointed out to the instructors, they immediately made changes saying, "It is terrible. We should not be doing this to you (the students)". And they cut back on the amount of work load. They cut back on testing.

> (Dave). I heard indirectly that she was doing something very unprofessional - she was using something which is prohibited at public places. So we approached her and gave her a warning that she needed to improve, and do something about her problem. First she denied that she did anything like that in the class, but then she agreed and said she would seek professional help. She seemed very sincere.

## 2. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Information plays a vital role in conflict episodes. Information can be managed in many different ways, and for different purposes. Even though information is used in one form or the other in all conflict management strategies, but in this category the focus is on information itself - how chairpersons manipulate information to manage conflict. The following three sub-categories of information management were identified in this study.

A. Gather information to get to the root of the problem.

B. Share information.

C. Informing superordinates.

A brief description for all the three subcategories is provided below. When an information strategy is used for other purposes - for example to win allies, or to show anger and so on - it is discussed under appropriate categories.

**A. Gather information**

Information is gathered to get to the root of the conflict so that a solution may be found. The information may be gathered from the affected parties or even from outside sources.

> (Carmen). So when I began as the chairperson, I decided you know, I had to keep my ears to the floor. . . . I would try to find out exactly the causes of any problem to deal with it immediately. . . . I listened to twenty-four students narrate stories about this instructor's intimidation, embarrassment, and humiliation of the students.

> (Dave). Now I heard these comments from chairpersons in other departments who had had students commenting to them. I said if there was any dissatisfaction, I would like to hear directly from the students in the class. I never had any visits from the students - not even a single one. And the things carried for a couple of weeks longer. Then I had a visit from some students who complained against the instructor. So I went to the Department and asked for a Department review. We interviewed *all* the students, and it appeared that there were some problems, but there was nothing so serious.

**B. Share information**

Chairpersons share relevant information with their colleagues, students, or other parties about some possible potential conflicts with a view to finding out if everything is going on all right, or if some corrective or precautionary measures are needed to be taken. They want to be kept informed about potential conflicts. They may explain and clarify their own limitations and/or actions as well so as to avoid any misgivings. The difference in 2A and 2B is that in the former situation the chairpersons collect the needed information for some suitable action, whereas in the latter situation, there is an exchange of information. Both parties provide and seek information about a conflict or a potential conflict, an action may or may not be planned.

> (Allison). And during the course of the semester I had met with them all (a group of new instructors) individually as well as collectively uh, to do some perception checking on how they were doing. And the message always was that the things were fine. It was heavy but they were getting along. People were helpful. At the end of the first semester when the student evaluations were in, I met with them again, all individually, to discuss their, their ratings, and again checking with them in terms of how they were doing. . . . And it was during the course of this perception checking that a lot of things came out from those new members that they were unhappy.

> (Carmen). I began to feel that the things were not good in the classes - the relationship between the instructors and this staff was no good. And so, . . . I had not had any of my instructors come forward. Finally, I was here on a Sunday, and I had two or three instructors come in. And I asked them, "How are things going? How are things going in the classrooms?" And they said, "Definitely not good". They were not happy with the the performance. They were not happy with the interaction.

### C. Informing Superordinates

Chairpersons bring some crucial conflicts or potential conflicts to the attention of their superordinates. They do so for a variety of reasons. For example, to put greater pressure of authority on the noncomplying party (coercion), or to transfer the responsibility of resolving a conflict to the superordinates, or to cover their butt and so on. But all such approaches are covered under appropriate strategies i.e. for the reasons the superordinates are informed. This sub-category covers those instances where chairpersons inform their superordinates simply to apprise them of a situation because the rules require that, or for some advice. Some possible future action may be in the cards, but at present they have no specific ideas in mind.

> (Dave). Yes, the Dean was aware of the situation. I think as the chairperson I have the responsibility to inform the Dean of the situation when there's a very serious conflict involved. I don't do it if I can resolve it myself, but if I anticipate something serious which may lead to dismissal or other drastic action, then I inform the Dean about what I am doing. I still carry on on my own, but I inform him that something might happen.
>
> (Norm). Well, I think I had an ongoing formal or informal talks with the Dean during the Fall. Therefore he knew that there was a problem all along. . . . We certainly discussed with him our recommended solution. So he knew there was a problem all term.
>
> (Stuart). I essentially approached the Dean and explained what was happening because the Dean wanted to be apprised of you know, the circumstances. I approached the Dean and basically explained that this is basically what the students were coming in with.

### 3. STRENGTHENING OWN POSITION FOR IMPENDING ACTION

Chairpersons may decide to "fight out" certain conflictual situations as a solution. When they are in this mode, they like to win. And in order to achieve their objectives, they try to win as many friends as possible, and want to gather as much evidence against their adversaries as possible to make their case strong in case they need to fight the battle. At the same time they make it certain that all their weaknesses are covered so that they are impervious to attack. They also try to find out the weaknesses, and the strategies planned by the opposing parties so as to plan their moves and countermoves. Four subcategories have been identified in this study:

A. Seeking information on the opposing party.

B. Organizing coalitions.

C. Gathering/preparing evidence against the opposing party.

D. Covering own butt.

The four subcategories are explained and supported below.

**A. Seeking information on the opposing party**

Sometimes chairpersons want to find out about the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing party and about their possible next moves before they plan their own moves so as to counter the moves of the opposing party or to make them less effective.

> (Vic). This one was simple, but in situations where there are more people involved - cliques to say - I do more digging; ask more; find where the alliances are. I find out the political dimensions of the situation.

> (Stuart). I sort of don't like to lose (Laughter). So since I don't like to lose, I want to make sure I know what the enemy has, you know. What the opponent has in terms of ammunition, and make sure that I am in the right.

**B. Organizing coalitions**

Chairpersons woo as many members as possible to gain their support and to strengthen their position in a conflict situation. In some situations they may have to appease some members to gain their support. Like many other strategies, sometimes this strategy is not explicit; it is implicit and it really has to be analyzed very carefully to identify.

> (Harvey). I think primarily the problem was that the President at that time was in a low-risk mode and he simply did not want to do anything that had a risk of failure. Uh, so that was overcome basically by individually approaching the members on the Committee

> and comforting them. It was mostly one-on-one with the individuals.
>
> (Edward). I said, "look, I don't feel comfortable with this hiring". And I gave my reasons and explained that that's the way I saw it. I discussed it with the Dean of the Division at that time, and of course, he saw it exactly the way I saw it. He said he could not approve it for the same reasons I gave. So, we both agreed that that was the way it was. So, the staff were very unhappy with my decision because I overruled.

**C. Gathering/preparing evidence against opposing party**

As mentioned earlier, chairpersons gather as much information against the opposing party as possible. They document all incidences and actions which could strengthen their position.

> (Edward). But the essence of it all is that I had it all documented. I had it all written down, and it was unbelievable. I had notes on this. I was keeping a record of what was going on as soon as I was tipped off, you know, the seriousness, the gravity of the situation. . . . We could not let this person go into another session; we could not force him to go to counselling, and we could not force him to go to a psychiatrist. Any way, I said that I would just keep documenting things. Every time there's a phone call, I will document and write down some of the conversation. Let other people know about it. I warned the secretarial staff.
>
> (Chris). The student persisted, came back to me again and said he wanted something done about the instructor. And then I said, " Well, in consultation with your counsellor, I think you should produce your specific concerns in writing, and present them to me, and I'll take those written statements and review them with the instructor and take whatever action necessary from there".

**D. Covering own butt**

Chairpersons also want to make certain that they themselves do not have any weaknesses which could be attacked by the opposing party. If they sense any, they try to cover them.

> (Paula). If a student receives the failing grade in this program, they have the right to appeal. Uhm, and so, we went over this very carefully. We consulted a neutral person to make sure that everything looked OK. That the two of us - who were so close to this situation, that we had not misperceived, or we hadn't gone too far in one direction or the other.

### 4. COERCING

Sometimes chairpersons use coercion in one form or the other to force compliance by a party in conflict. Coercion may include threatening with legal action, use of formal power, involving superordinates because they can exert lot more position power, or some other form. The following three subcategories of coercion have been identified in this study.

A. Threatening with legal action.

B. Using formal power.

C. Showing disapproval/anger; blaming the other party.

#### A. Threatening with legal action

In some situations, chairpersons have used the threat of a legal action successfully to resolve a conflict even though they did not support such a threat frequently.

> (Edward). And I says to the candidate, "Would you like to come in"? So she comes in, and her husband is going to come in too. He has already been abusive. I said, "I'm sorry, I have the appointment with the candidate only, and I don't have the appointment with you". "Oh, you have an appointment with me too whether you like it or not. You are not going to say this and you are not going to say that about my wife" all this kind of stuff. And he was just like nose-to-nose - like physical confrontation. So I just said to the secretary, "Would you please call the police"! And the secretary just immediately got on the phone, God bless her - I did not have to convince her. When they were threatened with the police coming, they vacated among a lot of rumbling and were never seen again.

> (Bill). And I confronted the member with it. She was embarrassed but she continued to deny it. I said, "OK, then you know what it means? I give you three days, if you don't change your mind, I'll have to proceed". Two days later she complied to some degree, but not completely. So, ultimately I had to go to the Vice-President. The Vice-President called a meeting with the two of us. At the meeting I said to the Vice-President, "The member and myself would proceed independently to the courts if the College did not resolve the issue". So I got to the jugular vein. To make the long story short, a couple of days later, the faculty member knocked on my door which was ajar. I said, "Come in". She fully complied with my demand, but seemed very mad and without saying a word she walked away.

### B. Using formal power

Sometimes chairpersons try to force compliance using their position power and imposing strict rules. They may threaten the party in conflict with some severe action unless some conditions are met. Often such a threat is sufficient to cause compliance, the actual threat may not have to be carried out. The chairpersons may also seek the help of their superordinates or other colleagues to exert additional pressure or the threat of greater power. Also, by doing so, the responsibility of taking any severe action is shared, and the chairperson alone does not become the focus of any negative reaction.

> (Dave). Uh, in this case I told the Dean about the students' complaints and about the unacceptable deportment of the instructor in the classroom. At one stage the Dean was directly involved, and in fact he wrote a letter warning the instructor that if she did not change her ways, she would be dismissed.

> (Edward). Even though the meeting was scheduled between myself and this individual, he brought a friend of his with him. And I had a senior colleague who was to attend the meeting too. I invited him (the colleague) because the situation was so volatile - potentially to be volatile - and I wanted to make certain that . . .

### C. Showing anger; Blaming the other party.

Sometimes chairpersons blame the opposing party and show anger to express their disapproval of the actions or behavior of the party. In some cases it works and the noncomplying party changes its approach or attitude, and a conflict or a potential conflict comes to an end, or is prevented from escalating any further. Sometimes the anger is shown simply to send a clear message that such a behavior or action will not be tolerated in future.

> (Jason). And I went through the roof. I told them that they had their heads screwed wrong. Uhm, I told them in a different kind of language than that, but basically that's what I meant. I told them that I was the person in-charge, OK? I indicated that any way. I openly admit that I did not make them feel very good at the meeting, and it was my intention to let it be known that if there were any further questions concerning our role, they would be directed to me and not any body else. I speak for the Department.

> (Another chairperson). I again went through the roof and told my subordinate that if I could, I would fire you right now and here. How dared he do that without my knowledge, especially when I had told him not to do so.

> (Fred). And I said, "Dean, you never undermine me like that again. If you do, find yourself another chairperson because I don't like being the pointman. I am not interested in being the pointman. And if it is goodies to dispense, I want to be the guy. And if it is baddies to dispense, I am happy to be the guy. But it works two ways. And I took my lumps and I don't expect to get chopped off at the knees for taking those lumps."

> (Stuart). I said, "Look, you violated the terms of our agreement. Therefore if you want to terminate, terminate".

## 5. TRANSFERRING RESPONSIBILITY TO OTHERS: FOLLOWING RULES

Frequently, the chairpersons hand over some cases involving conflicts to committees or their superordinates for resolution. The chairpersons themselves may be members of those committees. They normally do so when the issue, or a solution to the conflict is not very crucial to them and there is no personal interest at stake. In those situations, they resort to the application of rules/regulations etc. to set up committees and let the committees or the superordinates, as the case may be, deal with those cases. Sometimes there are standing committees of the department or the institution to deal with certain conflict situations. By doing so, they not only give the impression of a fair treatment, but are also able to avoid some unpleasant situations with which they might have had to deal. In other words, they transfer the responsibility of having to deal with a conflict to some other official group like committees or the superordinates. Even though rules or regulations may be followed, the intent is not to apply coercion but rather to use them as a guide to deal with some given situation. As an example, whether an individual is eligible for tenure or not.

> (Gina). So what the budget committee did was - we developed I guess, it would be a criteria - to decide, out of the ten tenured members which one should be released. We used the Collective Agreement to help us develop the criteria. And we took every body in the Department and applied that criteria to them, and came up with one individual. And we brought it before the Department to have it ratified.

> (Vic). Now my position was based on Institutional hiring practices even though there's no human resources department. It was clear that if a person met the criteria - the conditions, the credentials, the experience etc. etc. - of the position advertised, he/she was clearly eligible. . . . So I ended up saying, "Well that's where I sit on this". We decided to apply exactly the same process to all the candidates . . . The committee inevitably chose the best person

based on clear cut criteria of interview and his performance on a demonstration teaching.

## 6. MEDIATING

Sometimes chairpersons have to deal with conflicts which do not affect them directly but the parties involved in the conflict are members of their department. Even though such a conflict does not affect the chairpersons directly, it does affect the efficiency or the reputation of the Department. So the chairpersons have to deal with them. Often the chairpersons simply provide some guidance or advice to the parties separately, and suggest ways to deal with the situation. The actual resolution is left to the parties. However, they may intervene and try to bring the parties together and help sort their differences and smooth relations. In doing so, they try to create an environment where the conflicting parties may discuss issues and problems, and may exchange views whereby ultimately a resolution is reached. There is a difference between 1B and 1C on one hand and this situation on the other. In the former situations, the chairperson is directly involved as a party in the conflict, whereas in this case the chairperson is involved indirectly only and is simply being instrumental to help two parties to find a solution to their problem. The following two subcategories have been identified in the present study.

A. Providing guidance.

B. Bringing parties together.

### A. Providing guidance

> (Chris). I suggested to the student that he directly talk to the instructor, and I believe he did a couple of times. But in each case it ended up in a fairly hostile stand off between the two. My next suggestion to the student was that he go and speak to a member of the counselling services trying to get some advice or counsel in terms of a perspective on the problem.

### B. Bringing parties together

> (Peter). My role was to go there to cordially invite him (the Dean) to the meeting, provide him with an opportunity to explain his position. Invite the members to pose their questions and explain an opposing position, and then to attempt to have all of us together to understand what the barriers would be to a resolution on one side or the other. Try to find a medium ground which I think we were able to do. . . . A mediating role I think takes place just by establishing - and that's where I think a chairperson has an important role to play - and that's establishing a mood, establishing a tone for a meeting - a tone of openness, cordiality - those kinds of things. A chair can play a very very important role. And I think I was able to do that kind of thing.

> (Bob). I tried to intervene at various points in the process of this. I intervened individually. For instance, I would go and sit down with party A. I would talk to party A and would say, "Uhm, have you looked at this way"? which might be the way that party B was looking at this. "Have you seen it from party B's stand point"? I would do the same thing with party B. Trying to do so, you are creating a situation whereby the two could come together in a social setting where they might be able to find some commonality outside of an academic issue.

## 7. BIDING TIME

Sometimes the chairpersons decide not to take an action to deal with a conflict situation immediately, and may decide to delay action or even not to take an action at all. There could be a variety of reasons for not doing so. For example, the situation may not be that serious in the judgment of the chairperson so as to warrant an action, or the chairpersons may think that they don't have enough evidence against the alleged conflicting party so as to launch an action. There may be many more reasons for buying time. Based on such reasons, this strategy is further divided into the following subcategories.

A. Non-action.

B. Avoiding hasty and possible irrational actions.

C. Avoiding the issue.

**A. Non-action.**

Chairpersons may decide not to take any action immediately on a conflict situation because in their judgment either the situation is not serious enough to warrant any action, or they may think that the situation is temporary and could be improved with time. They may monitor the situation and gather information for some time and may even provide help or support to improve it.

> (Allison). The Department member had mixed reviews from the students in terms of the Department member's performance. I met with the members of the Department over the concerns expressed by the students. . . . The member was given an opportunity to get some help in the areas, both from the colleagues and the chairperson. At the end of the first semester things had slightly improved in the member's teaching as well as the member's rating with her colleagues in the Department so that the things were looking pretty good. At the end of the second year it was decided that we should renew her contract and give her an opportunity to improve going into the third year of the member's association with the Department.

> (Norm). Some of us did not like the way she was doing things in the class, and did not feel that she was going to accomplish the goals of her appointment or the course itself. Uh, talking to her, one of the things we agreed to do as a group was that she would follow more closely the advice of one of our instructors who is experienced in the course. She agreed to do that. We still did not

> like what she was doing, but we felt that it could work. Towards the end of the first term, we held some formal meetings with this select group within the Department as to how we should proceed. And at that time we established some very strict guidelines as to how this person should work in the second term. We did at the time consider some other options, but we thought that as the best solution for the Department and for the students was for her to continue teaching for the second term, but under more supervision.

### B. Avoiding hasty and possible irrational actions.

Another reason for some chairpersons to delay an action in a conflict situation is that they want to make certain that they don't take an action on emotional basis, or that they don't overreact to a situation. So, they give themselves some time for their emotions to dissipate. They may also study the situation more closely and may also seek the advice of some one on the issue. If the environment is new, they may try to establish themselves, and study the landscape before taking any action.

> (Allison). Well, I think to begin with, I needed to get over my own anger with them for not being open and honest. And that took me a little time to do. So, before I could even begin to deal with the conflict - uh, at least my own personal feelings towards their behavior took a while - they had already left.

> (Bill). Well, this doesn't sound very good. Uhm, I go home, I draft a memo - and it is a sort of protect mechanism - I write a memo to the person saying everything I want to say, and I get it out of my system. So, by the next day, I am back to being my normal self - I purged myself of all those feelings. Of course, none of those memos get sent. Uh, the next day, I reflect on my memo and realize that it was silly and wrong. And then, what I am going to say next, is startling - I kind of come from a Judeao-Christian back ground - and the next day I actually pray about it uh, because I have started to believe that I can walk into any pit and commit all sorts of blunders, and I really need to survey the landscape; think it through clearly; find the best possible resolution. And there is a time when I need a little peace and quiet first to survey the options rather than become frustrated and

> angry. So, really the first two steps are both calming steps - controlling steps. And then after that I will start to proceed with the conflict resolution.

> (Gina). Well, after I swear and may be place blame - after I have done all that - then probably I talk to somebody that I could trust and tell them what I have done or what I am proposing to do. And then, after I have done all that, I try to put myself in the shoes of the person I am having the conflict with, and look at the situation from their point of view. And then if I take the time to do that, then I find I can really solve things much more amicably.

### C. Avoiding the issue.

There are situations where some chairpersons simply avoid to deal with a conflict situation because the relationship with the party involved in the conflict is important to them and they don't want to take the risk of alienating the party. However, there could be two possible types of conflict avoidance: Firstly, it could be strategic where the chairperson purposely decides to postpone an action and waits for the right time to arrive to initiate some action, or secondly, it could simply mean that the chairperson is afraid of some negative consequences of an action and therefore is ignoring the problem hoping that it will go away. This seems to be particularly true when a solution to the conflict does not seem to be crucial to the chairpersons.

> (Paula). Then I went there for two or three days actually working in the area, and I found that very difficult because they treated me as if I was a new staff worker who did not know anything. And I had to bite my tongue and smile nicely to try and build some kind of rapport with the staff there, to try and build rapport with this particular agency person - educational officer - whatever she called herself.

> (Ashley). I just kinda said, "Oh well, if you don't choose to do this , what am I going to do about this"? And this has been going on for three years. So I guess I've been kinda avoiding this you know. And probably this year it will be the same thing you know. But I should probably bring it up at a staff meeting and say you know, "These are the problems, and how can we meet the needs of the Department"? And keep every one happy, and make it a problem solving situation. But I feel uncomfortable doing that too because these people are my colleagues and I respect them and I like them, and I want them to like me - all these kinds of things. So instead, I just say, "Oh well, I don't do anything about that".

### 8. DISSIMULATING

Sometimes chairpersons use some covert means to get their way in a conflict situation. These kinds of tactics may involve creating an illusion of fairness when in fact it may only be a smoke screen. They may do something that seems fair to other people, but only the chairpersons and their friends know that whatever they did was unethical. Sometimes there are risks involved in those tactics, but some chairpersons are willing to take such risks especially when such risks are calculated.

> (Dave). In order not to frighten the other members in the discipline, I informed them before the meeting what I was going to do, and they went along with it because they were fairly confident about it. But as you say, there was a risk involved because you can never be sure of what the outcome might be. In other words, to be blunt, I had a very good idea about who would come last in the competition, and at the end it turned out the way I expected it would.

> (Edward). We had a position - an opening in the Department - and we advertised that. This person applied for the job. This was a very able person and a nice person and actually we got along very well. So of course we gave him an interview. We interviewed some other people too because it was a matter of protocol more than anything else. But we had basically thought he would be the best person for the job because he had been doing the

job previously. We liked him.

## 9. COMPROMISING

There are some situations when chairpersons have to be responsive to the needs or demands of another party. They try to resolve a conflict situation or avoid a potential conflict by some type of compromise. In some other situations they may also accept some responsibility or blame for things that did not turn out the way they were planned, or hoped for, and as a result, they could be a cause for a potential conflict. Depending on the situation and the approaches used, two subcategories have been identified for this strategy.

A. Accepting some blame or responsibility.

B. Accepting some demands of the other party.

### A. Accepting some blame or responsibility

> (Shelley). The conflict was resolved by realizing that both parties had something to do with the conflict. Uh, we both accepted blame so to speak - uh, on the instructor side and on my side. I had given him too many courses uh, for the first semester. And on his side, he was not uh, totally prepared. At the beginning, he would walk into these courses, and may be wasn't as organized as he should have been.

### B. Accepting some demands of the other party

> (Fred). We are talking about budget. I was given the same number of dollars as the year before. With increasing enrollments, and required to crank out the same number of courses, when you did your sums, it wasn't possible. Something had to go. We collaborated for one course with another department for which we paid. So we just said, "Hey look, the other Department should find their own money. We have been supporting them for a number of years". And the Dean said, " No, no. That's just too easy. They don't have any money to buy it either". Uh, so I said, "OK, we will run one section - first come, first served. We will have to say 'no' to a lot of people".

## 10. UTILIZING PROFESSIONAL HELP TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR

If the behavior of a party is a constant source of conflicts, the chairpersons may ask the party to seek professional help or counselling to correct or improve such behavior. Such help may be provided by the institution if it has such resources and if the problem is not that serious. In more serious situations the chairpersons may demand outside help for individuals at their own expenses. There may also be an element of coercion in such a demand depending upon the behavior of the individual.

> (Henry). That's to tell the individual or the individuals who are behaving extremely badly that "because of the psychological problems, you are going to get some psychological, psychiatric help, or face termination". That's one of the things I was dealing with. I don't have the power to tell people that they must get some help as they have some serious psychological problems, but I can ask them that in the mean time it's going to be my way or the high way.

> (Harvey). It just creates a bad situation. We had gone some of the routes with the Student Services and the Counselling. In fact on one occasion, the Dean of the Student Services and the Registrar spent some time with this person, the student. But plain, did not get any change in her (the student's) attitude or behavior. The student did not finish the Program; so we lost her too.

> (Paula). I also shared some concerns that I had that she had not yet been in to seek counselling that I had recommended in the previous semester that she should seek counselling. I told her that the role of the instructors in the Program was for educational counselling only. That we were not qualified counsellors. Yes, we could sympathize, and yes, we could listen, and yes we could point her in the direction of professional help, but that we were not mental health, social, family counsellors. And that uhm, she really needed to seek this professional help. And I was concerned that she had not done this.

## 11. BEING ASSERTIVE

Sometimes chairpersons adopt an assertive mode and do not like to yield to the pressures of the other parties including from their superordinates. They stick to their position and support it with statistics, values, principles, precedents etc. They also resist any intimidation or threats.

In some other situations they become more proactive and exercise control wherever they can. They may discontinue some favors previously extended to another party, especially if the party is involved in a conflict with the chairperson now. Thus two subcategories of this strategy have been identified.

A. Resisting any pressures.

B. Exercising control.

### A. Resisting any pressures

> (Fred). And then the President said that it was time for a vote, and he said that Fred's Department accept their position. The other Dean said, "Well, I am with you, Boss". And our Dean said, "I'm with you, Boss". And I said, "Hey, hold on. I am getting really nervous here, and this is quite wrong as a profound injustice being done to a very capable person. . . . But they said, "Sorry Fred, this is a vote". And I said, "I am sorry. I want to go on record as opposing it. I don't think it meets the intent or the spirit of the Collective Agreement". So they said, "Can you prove your claims"? I said, "Absolutely". I literally ran to my office and pulled out the supporting documents, and that worked - they withdrew their imposition.

> (Edward). He called me at 12-12:30 at night and threatened me with the news, "I am going to get to the radio stations, and I am going to get to the news papers in the town against you". And that sort of stuff.
>
> I said, "I don't think it is very polite time to call someone, but if you want to go to a news paper or you want to go on the radio or something like that, please do so; go ahead; be my guest. I'll see you later.

> But try not to call me at my house any more". ...

**B. Exercising control**

> (Fred). As you know also, just increments alone would give you fewer and fewer free dollars the same year. So, I was given the same number of dollars. And with increasing enrolments, and required to crank out the same number of courses, when you did your sums, it was not possible, something had to go. . . . And we just said, "Hey look, the other department should find their own money. We have been supporting them for a number of years".

> (Stuart). The other chairperson said about the individual that I had hired, "Well, can I use this individual?" And as you know, the response was "certainly". But what happened was that it turned out that the individual had a lot more in mind than just the occasional use - through a more long-term, sort of, kinda implications. So what happened was the idea was "take the individual back". In other words, they are no longer allowed to use that individual. The conflict resolution was, "I am within my rights and say, no".

## 12. SEPARATING THE CONFLICTUANTS: MANIPULATING THE ENVIRONMENT

Using this strategy, conditions are created so that the parties in conflict get as little an opportunity as possible to run into each other. Their working stations are physically separated and/or their working times are so adjusted that they do not get an opportunity to work together. In extreme situations individuals may be dismissed from service.

> (Ralph). My way of dealing with that conflict - that personality difficulty between the two of us - was simply to keep my distance from her - not talk, not relate anything to her until watching her very very carefully. In a way I am glad that I did that because I survived.

> (Carmen). Many of the problems in our Department were the result of this individual's behavior. Starting right from the beginning of September, I had many students in my office complaining again about the instructor. I listened to 24 students narrate stories

> about this instructor's intimidation, embarrassment and humiliation of the students. I confronted the individual several times and explained the whole situation, but nothing seemed to register.
>
> Not only that, many of us received threatening phone calls at home from her family members telling us to lay off or we were going to get hurt. The situation got so bad that I had to report to my Dean. He realized that indeed there was a serious problem. So he began proceedings that involved interviewing all the students. As staff members, we were also interviewed. Uhm, the evidence was so overwhelming and so strong that the member was dismissed.

## SOURCES OF CONFLICT

Since conflict management strategies may be related to the sources of conflict, another major task of this study was to identify the sources of conflict which the chairpersons faced. However, no direct questions were asked of the chairpersons about the sources of conflict. They were grounded in the data, and emerged as the data were analyzed. Since the chairpersons interact with faculty, administration, students, and some external agencies, the sources of conflict revolve around them. The sources of conflict identified in this study are presented in Table 4. Some of the sources have been divided into subcategories for better clarification, and to determine if there is a relationship between the strategies used and the sources. The sources include substandard performance of instructors, incongruent values/ethics, incongruent expectations of responsibilities/issues, power/authority, communication problems, and disagreements in a wide range of areas. They also include personality problems and student issues. All these sources will be discussed in detail later.

### TABLE 4

### SOURCES OF CONFLICT

1. SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE

   Poor teaching style/attitude of instructors
   Poor/very poor performance of instructors

2. INCONGRUENT VALUES/ETHICS

3. INCONGRUENT EXPECTATIONS OF RESPONSIBILITIES/ISSUES

4. POWER/AUTHORITY

5. COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS: MISPERCEPTIONS

6. DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN GROUPS OVER ACADEMIC MATTERS

7. DISAGREEMENTS OVER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

8. DISAGREEMENT WITH ADMINISTRATION OVER ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES/PERSONNEL

9. PERSONALITY PROBLEMS

   Strong hostility among instructors
   Strong hostility towards the chairperson

10. STUDENT ISSUES: INCONGRUENT EXPECTATIONS OF BEHAVIOR/ATTITUDE/PERFORMANCE

11. BUDGETARY PROBLEMS

    Dealing with limited resources

    Major cuts: Eliminating positions

# CHAPTER 5

# FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

## VALUES

Identification of the values underlying the conflict management strategies used by the chairpersons was another important objective of the present study. Even though no questions dealing with values were directly asked, the conflict management strategies used by the chairpersons were fully imbued in values. Therefore, the transcripts of the interviews were carefully analyzed to uncover the values. The values thus emerging were categorized. Seven major categories of values were identified with most of the categories having some subcategories. The typology of values thus developed is presented in Table 5. The categories and the subcategories are supported by excerpts from the interviews as follows.

### 1. CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS

### A. COLLEAGUES

Chairpersons seem to have a great consideration for their colleagues and they seem to try hard to be helpful to them in many ways. They listen to the concerns of their colleagues empatheticlly and try to avoid any surprises. They seem to respect the feelings and views of others. This was reflected directly or indirectly in their approaches to

## TABLE 5

## TYPOLOGY OF VALUES

**1. CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS.**

A. COLLEAGUES

- a. Being sensitive to the needs/wishes/views of others
- b. Making people feel comfortable; Being cordial
- c. Caring for colleagues
- d. Being predictable; Avoiding any surprises
- e. Not hurting the pride of others

B. STUDENTS

- a. Providing best service to students
- b. Being sensitive to the needs of the students
- c. Expulsion of students only as the last resort
- d. Confidentiality of students

**2. COLLEGIALITY**

- a. Participative decision making
- b. Being fair
- c. Coercion or dismissal only as the last resort

**3. HARMONY: REDUCING POTENTIAL CONFLICT**

- a. Expediting conflict resolution
- b. Satisfaction of the players with the management of conflict
- c. Leaving lines of communication open
- d. Cooperation among members: Achieving compatibility

**4. ESTEEM FOR THE DEPARTMENT/COLLEGE**

**5. WORK ETHICS**

- a. Opposing patronage
- b. Opposing discrimination
- c. Fighting for the right position/person

**6. FOSTERING INNOVATION: OPENNESS TO NEW IDEAS/METHODS**

**7. PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT: SECURING ADDITIONAL FUNDS**

resolving conflicts and in expressed sentiments. Specific examples are as follows:

**a. Being sensitive to the needs/wishes/views of others.**

> (Peter). You have to look at yourself in the role of chairperson, and you have to, you have to watch being sensitive. I don't think a chairperson will be successful who is not sensitive, who cannot feel what other people are feeling. . . . You have to listen. And you have to do that listening with understanding, and communicate the fact that you are doing this. . . . And people were feeling better. And sometimes that is the most important thing.

> (Chuck). It was unfortunate that I did not take the opportunity to explore a little deeper with him about our relationship. And uh, I still think that there are times that need empathetic listening which might give people a chance to fully express their concerns. . . . I feel confident that we can have, or I can have, in any situation, a win-win situation, and I think the biggest part of that is listening with understanding and being able to respond.

> (Chris). I did not want to be seen by the Department to be unaware or insensitive in terms of their very strong opposition. And while I could probably have made the presentation very forcefully, and it could be on their behalf even though I did not agree with that, I felt it would be a bit unwise knowing that the Department knew that I did not agree with them. So, I had made a prior arrangement asking the vice-chairperson of the Department who was very eloquent and very strong in his belief, to speak on behalf of the Department.

**b. Making people feel comfortable; being cordial**

> (Bob). I believe that to resolve this conflict, the basic rule is to get people talking and thinking, and starting people to feel *comfortable* with the state of union.

> (Vic). And I did this on one-to-one - it wasn't public. I did this in her office. She was on her most *comfortable* ground. I did not call her to my office. I went to hers which I think was important.

> (Peter). I mentioned cordiality, and I think there's always a place for that. I don't think there's always a need for that, and I don't say I've always adhered to this, but there's never a need to be unkind

or disrespectful or foul-mouthed, or things of that nature. I think they bring more harm. I think you can be forthright in taking a position of your own without resorting to anything that is a put down or would be damaging to somebody else.

### c. Caring for colleagues

(Ashley). I always let her know that you know, that on a personal basis I cared about her. I cared about her succeeding, and I really did try and wanted to support her and assist her in every possible way.

(Allison). The following year we set up a "Buddy System" where an older member was assigned to a new faculty member as a buddy - as their mentor for the year - and that system worked really well. And therefore with the new people coming on, uh, you know, really made the difference. Also, at the orientation we had made things very clear about how important it was to ask for help when you were new, that certain people were willing to provide assistance and provide help.

### d. Being predictable; avoiding any surprises

(Vic). Because the most important thing in all this process is that people have to find you predictable. I think that will undermine a lot of problems of conflict. If there's predictability there, it breeds lots of comfortableness and trust, and if there are any difficulties, they can be resolved much easily if that trust is there. By predictiblity I do not mean agreement on everything, predictability simply means my colleagues would know how I react in a given situation.

(Bob). We believe very strongly in the fact that people in this organization, or in any organization, do not respond well to surprises. So, therefore, if you believe that, you buy into that, what you have to do then is to reduce the element of surprise. . . . And people will not respond very well to the change if they are surprised. You can get things out where they can see them, then avoid again as I said, the surprises.

### e. Not hurting the pride of others

(Ashley). But I think by being open with her right from the very beginning, I gave her a chance to make that decision so she could leave with her self-esteem in tact. . . . I always let her know that you know, that on a personal basis I cared about her. . . . I was very relieved when she came to that decision herself, and I felt that I left her with some pride.

> (Ralph). And you help solve the problem because no one has lost face. Where I think you go to a formal situation where you have the instructors and the students all around the table to solve the problem, there are enough people who will lose face there, and still the problem won't be solved. So, doing it in a confidential manner, to go and talk to the instructor - to do so in a way so that he does not lose any face.

> (Shelley). I also tried to start off with being very positive and thanking him for his uh, effort and work that he was putting in the classroom. And then I gradually brought him to the conversation to being that . . . he was the one who actually through questioning, was able to resolve the conflict and the issues himself.

B. STUDENTS

It also came very clear from the interviews that almost all the chairpersons had only the best interests of students in mind when they were resolving conflicts. Jeopardising the interests of students in any way was the last thing that the chairpersons would do. The following excerpts are illustrative:

**a. Providing best service to the students**

> (Edward). And the other issue that was very paramount on my thinking was that the students would have one instructor for four months and then this instructor would no longer be there, and they (the students) would have a brand new instructor for the next four months. And I did not see this as an optimal arrangement either, because in the best interest of the students, you should have some continuity there.

> (Chris). Clearly, the next avenue would be to see if there was a way that the student could be accommodated to some degree to complete that particular course with another instructor. That's simply acknowledging that the student is a client, and that's the reason that the College operates. It will be my priority to ensure that they are able to complete the program requirements.

**b. Being sensitive to the needs of the students**

> (Patricia). This particular instructor then worked with this group of students and there were no further problems. This was a difficult group of students to work with. Other instructors have had problems with

> this group. The students that have come back are older. They have been out of school for a number of years, have a lot of experience and have to be treated differently than the students who are out of high school recently. As soon as the instructor realized that and treated the students as per their needs, the problem disappeared.

**c. Expulsion of a student only as the last resort**

> (Harvey). I have nothing but the greatest respect for him as a person and as an instructor and in every which way. And the instructor approached me privately one day and said that he appreciated the way the problem was being handled with the student *because we were trying to save the student. We were not just trying to ditch her*. . . . Instead of saying that this is an unacceptable behavior and the student has to go, I took my cues from the Department, you know. *Every one was trying to save the student*. And in the mean while, we lost the instructor.

**d. Confidentiality of students important.**

> (Stuart). Essentially, we felt of course, *that we could not compromise the student confidentiality*. . . . I could not reveal that information because that would have compromised confidentiality.

**2.COLLEGIALITY**

The chairpersons also attached a great value to collegiality and seemed to work as a team. When managing a conflict, they tried to involve all the members in finding some solution (participative decision making). In situations where they have to play a mediator's role, they try to be fair to each party and avoid taking sides. They also seemed to avoid dismissal as far as possibe.

**a. Participative decision making**

> (Fred). And uh, that was done *in full consultation with the Department*. We convened a meeting to do that and we had students reps there too. They are bona fide full voting members of the Department. And they held a fight. They said uh, . . . I tried to get them to understand that there are constraints that we had, and these are the needs that we must meet, and there's not

enough money to meet the neeeds, and something had to go. The students' only suggestion was, "OK, we cut the options".

(Bob). Another important rule in terms of reduction of this type of conflict is to allow people to solve their own problems. Usually, the conflict that's solved by the participants is conflict that's reduced maximally. And so, we want to create a situation *where participants are solving their own problems*. . . . What you need to do as the leader though, is to facilitate the process. You need to create an environment where people are talking to people, *particulary the people that are in conflict with each other* - both chasing the same limited resources, as an example.

**b. Being fair; not taking sides**

(Peter). I would not take any kind of position that would set up the lines, you know - the attack sort of thing. But when you play a role, you have to play a very careful mediating role in terms of not only allowing the exchange, but inviting the exchange and being fair to both parties. You have to allow that to happen.

**c. Coercion or dismissal only as the last resort**

(Carmen). The evidence was so overwhelming and so strong that the member was dismissed. It does not sound like a very successful resolution of the conflict. However, we had no other choice. And this year, it is almost like the first year that I have worked at the College - looks like a brand new place. The problems that we usually had at this time of the year - students dropping out in large numbers, students coming in large numbers to see me - has not happened this year. And it is a new positive environment where people are just left to their jobs, and there is no maligning or hidden agenda, or things going on behind closed doors that had occurred in previous years. So, that's what I would call a successful resolution of a conflict, although probably not the ideal. *If we were given a choice, we would have liked the member to make changes so we could work together and not have this thing happened*.

(Patricia). *Oh, I certainly did want to avoid him being dismissed, there's no doubt about that*. I just wanted him to change his behavior or to understand the damage that was being done by his behavior. *Uhm, I really did not want to go to the formal grievance procedures*. Indeed, when I went, the counsellor told me that I had gone far beyond than what I needed to do. That I had

> given him every chance, that just wasn't working. Uhm, the senior administrator had spoken to him. It did not seem to make any difference. Uh, there did not seem to be the comprehension of the seriousness of the problem.

### 3. HARMONY: REDUCING POTENTIAL CONFLICT

Most chairpersons seemed to value harmony and smooth operation in their departments, and did not want any conflict in their departments to escalate. So they tried to reduce or contain any conflict or a potential conflict. They also felt that it was very important that some solution was found to a conflict situation as quickly as possible, because in their judgment a delay in finding a solution could worsen the situation. Besides, they also strived to satisfy maximum number of players involved in a conflict, and to achieve cooperation and compatibility among the members. They also believed in keeping the lines of communication open.

#### a. Expediting conflict resolution

> (Carmen). So, I feel I wasn't successful the first time in solving the problem because I just did not spend the time or did not perceive it to be that serious. *And you should never put it off*. You should always spend time, work it out. I don't feel so bad now in retrospect, but I feel I could have prevented the conflict by spending some time initially. . . . *I did not take action prompt enough*.

> (Chris). My role in conflict resolution, I think, I think was fairly effective and it was getting them to agree *that we have to solve it fairly quickly*.

#### b. Satisfaction of the players

> (Peter). I do not remember the details of the conflict resolution. But *what I am aware of is that people were feeling better, and sometimes that is more important* than whether it is five dollars, or it is ten dollars. It is, do you feel better because you understand better.

(Shelley). *And my philosophy now is to work out something that is mutually a positive outcome for both parties.* Not just for parties, but something that works well for the institution and for the students. There are lot of people that you really have to look after in resolving conflict so that the whole college community is serviced better.

(Chris). So, I did not really discuss anything in terms of the substance. I just basically talked to them saying that I am not making judgments about who is right or who is wrong, but I would like to work with you both, to bring this to as quick a resolution as possible *which satisfies everyone*.

**c. Leaving lines of communication open**

(Jason). So, for a period of one or two weeks there was virtually no communication. And finally I started putting it down. . . . Ah, this was meaning that as far as I was concerned, I was opening the communication in terms of written things. To initiate this from chairperson's point of view, "Look, I am sorry I have to deal it this way, but it is pretty apparent that we cannot communicate, OK? *I want to leave the lines of communication open,* so I am doing it written".

(Bill). I don't think she and I said another word for four years. . . . Uh, I would sometimes speak on the same subject that she had spoken on at the Department meetings, and I would even refer to her comments at the meetings, but she never acknowledged my existence for four years. And I do have to admit that after those four years, I do say "Hi" to her in the morning, and she would actually say "Hi" to me, and that is the extent of our conversations seven years later that we say "Hi" to each other - *the thing I find so frustrating that we still are not communiating with each other beyond saying "Hi" to each other*.

**d. Cooperation among members: achieving compatibility**

(Stuart). I think cooperation - the essence of cooperation is more valuable than retaining the services of one individual. What happens then is that we suffer more in the long run because of it.

(Allison). And I talked to him about the importance of, of being cohesive as a department. And that the Department is making the decision and that people support the decision of the Department, and not to go off on your own to vote against what the Department members have agreed to, *because that's how we deal within the Department and within the College in a collegial manner*.

> (Sam). I think what we really sought was collegiality. And I think some of the errors we made were related to roles - certainly relating to compatibility of personality, and probably better role models for the actual courses because we were pretty new. . . . *Now, I would be much more judicious in looking at personalities making sure that the group works well.*

## 4. ESTEEM OF THE DEPARTMENT/COLLEGE

Reputation of the department or the college was also paramount on the minds of the chairpersons. They did not want to allow anything to happen in their departments which would undermine the reputation of their departments or that of the College. They did not support substandard performance or even unprofessional outlook.

> (Dave). There was damage done to the Department as she was a member in our Department. And there was damage done to the College because a word like that gets around quickly in a community like ours. So, even if I did not have the formal grounds to act, I think I should have monitored the situation more closely, and perhaps I could have gotten her out of the classroom quicker. I think I should have done something earlier so that the *damage would not have been that serious to the reputation of the Department and the College*.

> (Ashley). I knew I could not hire her simply because I liked her. I knew it wasn't in the best interests of the students and the Department. *Our reputation was on the line and they had to come over my personal feelings for her*, and that was going to be the bottom line. So, I was relieved when she came to that decisicn (resigning from her position) herself.

## 5. WORK ETHICS

Moral values or standards also seemed high on the minds of the chairpersons. They seem to oppose patronage, and discrimination, and support the right position or the right person. This is reflected from the strategies they used to manage conflict.

### a. Opposing patronage

> (Edward). I said, "Well, I am the chairperson of the committee. Do you understand as a staff, if we hire this person, we are going to have to pay double in effect? And if we are going to *do this as a favor to this person* - you agree to this, we all agree to do this - then you have to be prepared to face the consequences of our actions professionally to the rest of the College Commmunity as well".

### b. Opposing discrimination and special treatment

> (Bill). Believe it or not, she got a settlement with the insurance company with the blessings of the College. The President did this over some of our objections. We thought that truth is more valuable in terms of people understanding the nature of this Institution. . . . There are many other people in this College who, I would say, are in the same situation as this instructor, and they do not get any settlements. So, *why was a person allowed to strike that kind of settlement when she could still do the job?*

### c. Fighting for the right position/person

> (Fred). And it saved the job of a person whom I thought a world of. He was a great contributor, and it would have **killed** me, uh, it would have killed me to phone him and say, "X, you cannot be hired". I fought for the right person.

## 6. FOSTERING INNOVATION: OPENNESS TO NEW IDEAS/METHODS

Some chairpersons are very open to new ideas or methods and want to give them a try. And in doing so, they are willing to take a few risks too. The following excerpts will clarify the argument.

> (Norm). But we were willing to give him a chance as we would do with a number of *new methods and new ideas*. We were willing to give him a chance and let him try in our College, in our environment *something that was a little bit different* than what a couple of us had been doing. May be what we were doing wasn't totally right either. Because there's always room for changes, *there's room for new ideas, new methods*. So, we decided sure, let's give him an opportunity; may be things would be better than what we had anticipated.

> (Chris). I guess my own nature is one that *I like to take a few risks when I see a potential for a gain.* Uh, in this case, I think, what was lost was a potential for a gain, I think in terms of the nature of the operation. I still feel that it would have resulted in a more meaningful operation.

## 7. PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Some of the chairpersons seemed to love the opportunity to get some extra funds from the Government or any other agency even if there were some undesirable strings attached. It seemed as if securing additional funds was a matter of personal pride for those chairpersons.

> (Jason). So, there was a competition, if you wish, between colleges to receive X amount of dollars. And the criterion to receive the money was based upon the possibility of our Department delivering the service that we all colleges could individually deliver. And the idea was to convince the granting department that we were more deserving than any other college to receive the money. . . . And without thinking my colleague indicated that there was probably no way that we could deliver that service. And that was it. I mean some other college got the money, and I, at the meeting got very upset. . . . Ah, it just never occurred to anybody who has been around this scenario long enough that we would turn any government money down at all if you could get it. So, it was shocking. Any way, we did not get the money.

> (Harvey). We had a student that lacked some social skills and on the first day, in the introduction period when they were getting their orientation, it showed up already. And to make a long story short, it began to drive one particular instructor crazy. . . . The student had some training in the instructional area and was convinced that she knew more about the course than the instructor. So, that caused some problems. She came to us with the Government grant, and *so in order to get the grant, we took the student too.*

## FREQUENCY OF THE VALUES

The frequencies of values (the number of episodes in which a given value was identified) emerged in the study have been presented in Table 6. A given value has been counted only once in an episode no matter how many times it was identified. As is clear from the table, the most dominant values include consideration for others, harmony, and collegiality. Personal achievement was not a primary concern of the chairpersons, especially when it came to securing additional funding for their respective departments. As Johns (1989) posits that people join those professions where their values are supported, the values held by the chairpersons seem very appropriate and befitting for the profession.

## TABLE 6

## FREQUENCY OF VALUES

| VALUE | NUMBER OF EPISODES |
|---|---|
| 1. CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS | |
| A. Colleagues | |
| a. Being sensitive to the needs of others | 16 |
| b. Making people feel comfortable | 7 |
| c Caring for colleagues | 6 |
| d. Being predictable; Avoiding surprises | 2 |
| e. Not hurting the pride of others | 6 |
| B. Students | |
| a. Providing best service to students | 11 |
| b. Being sensitive to the needs of students | 3 |
| c. Expulsion of students not favored | 1 |
| d. Confidentiality of students important | 1 |
| 2. COLLEGIALITY | |
| a. Participative decision making | 3 |
| b. Being fair; Not taking sides | 5 |
| c. Coercision or dismissal only as the last resort | 7 |
| 3. HARMONY: REDUCING POTENTIAL CONFLICT | |
| a. Expediting conflict resolution | 5 |
| b. Satisfaction of the players | 9 |
| c. Leaving lines of communication open | 6 |
| d. Cooperation among members | 9 |
| 4. ESTEEM FOR THE DEPARTMENT/COLLEGE | 4 |
| 5. WORK ETHICS | |
| a. Opposing patronage | 1 |
| b. Opposing discrimination and special treatment | 2 |
| c. Fighting for the right position/person | 2 |
| 6. FOSTERING INNOVATION: OPENNESS TO NEW IDEAS/METHODS | 2 |
| 7. PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT: SECURING ADDITIONAL FUNDS | 3 |

# CHAPTER 6

# DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOURCES OF CONFLICT AND STRATEGIES

Data were analyzed to determine if there was a relationship between the sources of conflict and the strategies used by the chairpersons. Before any possible relationship between the two is explored and discussed, Table 4 is reproduced again listing the sources of conflict for easy reference. Also, the frequencies of the strategies (the number of conflict episodes for which a given strategy was used by the chairpersons) are given in Table 7. A given strategy was counted only once in any episode, no matter how many times it was used in that episode. As is clear from the table, preventing or containing conflict was the most frequently used strategy. It was followed by information management, strengthening own position, and coercing. Dissimulating was the least used strategy.

Strategies used for a particular source of conflict by different chairpersons are listed in Table 8 to identify if a relation exists between the source of conflict and the strategies used. Substandard performance, incongruent values/ethics, incongruent expectations of responsibilities/issues, and student issues were the sources of conflict that seemed to require maximum number of strategies to manage, in that order.

## TABLE 4

## SOURCES OF CONFLICT

1. SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE
    - A. Poor teaching style/attitude of instructors
    - B. Poor/very poor performance of instructors
2. INCONGRUENT VALUES/ETHICS
3. INCONGRUENT EXPECTATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES/ISSUES
4. POWER/AUTHORITY
5. COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS: MISPERCEPTIONS
6. DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN GROUPS OVER ACADEMIC MATTERS
7. DISAGREEMENTS OVER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS
8. DISAGREEMENT WITH ADMINISTRATION OVER ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES/PERSONNEL
9. PERSONALITY PROBLEMS
    - A. Strong hostility among instructors
    - B. Strong hostility toward the chairperson
10. STUDENT ISSUES: INCONGRUENT EXPECTATIONS OF BEHAVIOR/ATTITUDE/PERFORMANCE
11. BUDGETARY PROBLEMS
    - A. Dealing with limited resources
    - B. Major cuts: Eliminating positions

## TABLE 7

## FREQUENCIES OF STRATEGIES

| Strategy | | Number of episodes |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | PREVENTING OR CONTAINING CONFLICT | |
| 1A. | Being sensitive to the needs | 11 |
| 1B. | Providing support; Friendly behavior | 22 |
| 1C. | Exploring alternatives; Being consultative | 15 |
| 1D. | Confrontation; Warning/clarification | 33 |
| 2. | INFORMATION MANAGEMENT | |
| 2A. | Gather information | 14 |
| 2B. | Share information | 25 |
| 2C. | Informing superordinates | 12 |
| 3. | STRENGTHENING OWN POSITION | |
| 3A. | Seek information on opposing party | 2 |
| 3B. | Organizing coalitions | 12 |
| 3C. | Gathering/preparing evidence | 15 |
| 3d. | Covering own butt | 4 |
| 4. | COERCING | |
| 4A. | Threatening with legal action | 2 |
| 4B. | Using formal power | 18 |
| 4C. | Showing disapproval/anger; Blaming | 13 |
| 5. | TRANSFERRING RESPONSIBILITY: FOLLOWING RULES | 10 |
| 6. | MEDIATING | |
| 6A. | Providing guidance | 9 |
| 6B. | Bringing parties together | 8 |
| 7. | BIDING TIME | |
| 7A. | Non-action | 4 |
| 7B. | Avoiding hasty/irrational actions | 3 |
| 7C. | Avoiding the issue | 1 |
| 8. | DISSIMULATING | 3 |
| 9. | COMPROMISING | |
| 9A. | Accepting some blame | 4 |
| 9B. | Accepting some demands | 4 |
| 10. | UTILIZING PROFESSIONAL HELP | 6 |
| 11. | BEING ASSERTIVE | |
| 11A. | Resisting pressures | 7 |
| 11B. | Exercising control | 11 |
| 12. | SEPARATING CONFLICTUANTS | 13 |

## TABLE 8

## SOURCES OF CONFLICT AND THE STRATEGIES USED

| Chairperson | Source of conflict | Strategies Used |
|---|---|---|
| Peter | 1A. Poor teaching style | 1B, 3C, 6A |
| Carmen | | 1B, 1D, 2A, 2B |
| Herb | | 1D, 2A, 2B, 2C, 3B, 3C, 4B, 5, 7A |
| Ralph | | 1B, 1D, 6A |
| Patricia | | 1B, 1D, 2B, 6B |
| Norm | 1B. Poor performance | 1C, 1D, 2A, 2B, 2C, 3B, 3C, 4B, 5, 7A, 12 |
| Allison | | 1B, 1D, 3B, 3C, 4B, 5, 12, |
| Shelley | | 1B, 1C, 1D, 2B, 9A |
| Shelley | | 12 |
| Stuart | | 1B, 1D, 2C, 3B, 3C, 4B, 5, 6A, 10, 12 |
| Ashley | | 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 2A, 2B, 2C, 3C, 4B, 5, 6, 10, 12 |
| Henry | 2. Incongruent values/ethics | 1D, 2C, 3C, 4B, 5 |
| Dave | | 1D, 2B, 2C, 3C, 3D, 4B, 7A, 10, 11B, 12. |
| Carmen | | 1D,2A, 3B, 3C, 4B, 12 |
| Patrici | | 1A, 1C, 1D, 2A, 2B, 2C, 3A, 3C, 4B |
| Bill | | 1D,2B, 3B,3C,4B,4C,12 |
| Bill | | 1B, 1D, 2C, 3C, 4A, 4B, 4C, 7B, 11A |
| Ashley | 3. Incongruent expectations of responsibilities/issues | 1B, 1D, 5, 7A, 7C |
| Allison | | 1B, 1D, 2B, 3B |
| Allison | | 1B, 1D, 2B, 4C |
| Edward | | 2B,3B, 5, 8, 11A, 11B |
| Jason | | 1C,1D, 2A,2B,4B,4C,9A |
| Stuart | | 1A, 1C, 2A, 11B |
| Marg | | 1B, 1C, 1D, 4B |
| Marg | | 1B, 1D, 4C |
| Joyce | | 1D |
| Vic | | 1A, 1C, 1D, 4C |
| Jason | 4. Power/authority | 1B, 1D, 2B, 4B, 4C, 9A, 11A, 11B |
| Chuk | Communication problems | 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B |
| Chuk | | 1A, 2A, 2B, 9A |

## TABLE 8 (Continued)

| Chairperson | Source of conflict | Strategies |
|---|---|---|
| Joyce | 6. Disagreements (academic matters) | 1A, 2A, 6B, 11B |
| Sam | | 1C, 1D, 4B, 6A, 6B, 9B, 11B, 12 |
| Chris | 7. Disagreements over organizational matters | 1A, 2A, 2B, 9B, 11A |
| Fred | 8. Disagreements with administration over allocation of resources/personnel | 2A, 3B, 4C, 11A |
| Harvey | | 3B |
| Peter | | 1A, 1B, 6B |
| Bob | 9A. Hostility among instructors | 1B, 4C, 6A, 6B |
| Gina | | 1B,1C,1D, 2B,2C,4C,6A |
| Henry | | 1D, 2B, 2C, 3C, 4B, 4C, 6A, 8, 11B |
| Vic | | 1D, 3D, 5, 6A, 11B |
| Paula | 9B. Hostility towards the chairperson | 1B, 1D, 2C, 3B, 3C, 4B, 4C, 7B, 12 |
| Ralph | | 12 |
| Chris | 10. Student issues | 1B, 1C, 1D, 2B, 3D, 6A, 6B, 10 |
| Edward | | 1D, 2B, 3B, 3C, 4A 4B, 4C, 11A, 11B,12 |
| Harvey | | 1D, 2A, 10, 12 |
| Paula | | 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 2B, 3C, 6A, 6B, 10, 12 |
| Bob | 11A. Limited resources | 1A,1B,1C, 2b, 6B, 11b |
| Fred | | 1C, 2B, 4C, 5, 11B |
| Dave | 11B. Major cuts | 1C, 5, 8, 9B |
| Gina | | 1C, 2B, 2C, 3D, 5, 9B, 11A |

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONFLICT SOURCES AND STRATEGIES

A quick glance at Table 8 which lists strategies used by the chairpersons to resolve conflicts arising from different sources gives the impression that there may not be any significant relationship between the strategies used and conflict sources because there seems to be so much variation of strategies for any given source of conflict - even by the same chairperson. However, this may not necessarily be the case. Before we discuss this any further, a few points are noteworthy.

1. Confronting the issue as strategy (1D), has been used in 33 different episodes followed by information sharing (2B) which has been used in 25 episodes by different chairpersons. Both these strategies are used to prevent a conflict from escalating. Chairpersons have also used friendly behavior and providing support as a strategy to handle conflicts, which again demonstrates that chairpersons at the College try very hard to prevent, or to contain conflict.
2. Chairpersons don't seem to avoid the conflict issues altogether. Avoiding the issue as a strategy to handle conflict has been used only in one episode. Even there, it was used as one of the five strategies.
3. Chairpersons do not seem to engage in power struggle, or a win-lose approach to handle conflicts. Even though using formal power (4B) as a strategy was used in 18 episodes, it was never used as the only strategy. In fact, whenever it was used, it seems to have been used as a last resort

because invariably it was preceded by strategy 1D which is confronting the issue or warning/clarification of issues etc. So, it seems that formal power was used to resolve a conflict only when other approaches did not work. Also, it seems to have been used in extreme cases where separating the conflictuant(s) was the end result. It seems particularly true when it (4B) was used in conjunction with 3C.

Coming to determining any relationship between the sources of conflict and the strategies used, it seems that even though different chairpersons have used different strategies to resolve conflicts originating from similar sources, some common strategies seem to have been used by most of the chairpersons for the same source of conflict. For example,

1. For source 1A, four out of the five chairpersons used 1B and 1D. Mediation was used by three.
2. For source 1B, five chairpersons out of the six used 1B, 1D, and 12 as conflict-handling strategies. 3C and 4B were also used by four.
3. Similarly, while dealing with values and ethics incongruency, all the six chairpersons used 1D, 3C and 4B. Four of them also used 2C, and three used 12 as well.
4. For the issue of incongruent expectations of responsibilities/issues which was reported in 11 episodes, 9 of the 11 chairpersons used 1D, 6 used 2B, and 5 used 2B and/or 4B

5. When students issues were a source of conflict, all the four chairpersons used 1D. Three chairpersons demanded/provided professional help, and in three cases the students in question either left or were forced to leave (use of strategy 12).

6. While dealing with budget cuts, exploring alternatives (1C) was pursued in all the four episodes described, and information sharing (2B) was used in three cases.

7. Similarly, when it came to dealing with personality issues where some members showed some strong hostility towards some other members (source 9A), 3 of the 4 chairpersons showed disapproval of the behavior (4C) when they took the issue with the members involved (1D), and all the four chairpersons provided some counselling to the former when the latter acted as mediators to resolve the differences (6A).

8. Another important factor which must have contributed significantly to the differences in strategies is the fact that almost half of these episodes have been reported where the chairpersons were not satisfied with their strategies/outcomes. It is quite possible that if strategies for successful handling of similar conflicts were compared, many more similarities in strategies might have emerged.

Based on the above observations, it can be concluded that even though we have not proved it statistically, and we have not calculated any correlation between the strategies and the sources of conflict, there is some evidence that some relationship does exist. And if chairpersons have used different strategies for similar conflicts, the differences could be attributed to the following factors.

## FACTORS ACCOUNTING FOR THE DIFFERENCES

### 1. Context of the conflict.

Even though sources of conflict can be classified as one broad category, there could be some important differences between individual cases within the same category. Such differences could include severity of the problem, relationship between the chairperson and the other party, attitude and/or approach of the other party, and conditions responsible for the problem etc. This fact is well illustrated by five chairpersons (Shelley, Bill, Allison, Marg and Chuk) when they used different strategies to deal with similar conflict situations. (Please see Table 8). Shelley provides most glaring differences in strategies while dealing with two faculty members who both had poor performance. Bill provides another such example when he dealt with two instructors in conflict situations involving some serious differences in values/ethics. Even though there were some strategies which were common to both the cases, there were some differences as well. Whereas one faculty member was let go, the other was allowed to continue. So, context of the conflict could play an important role in determining the strategies that a chairperson will use.

**2. Personal stake of the chairperson**

Strategies used by chairpersons to resolve a given conflict also depend upon their personal stakes. If the outcome of a conflict is much less crucial to one chairperson compared to another for a similar conflict (conflicts rooted in similar sources), the former may not use coercion to resolve the conflict whereas the latter may use it. For example, one chairperson may choose to ignore the absence of a faculty member from the meetings if there are many others to share departmental responsibilities, but some others may not like to ignore because they have to do the job of the absentee.

**3. Conflict management training**

Some people are better trained to deal with conflict than others. The better trained people have a rich repertoire of skills to handle conflict and they use it effectively under different circumstances. Some others who are not so trained may either avoid the issue, or may use only the confrontational (the win-lose) approach to resolve all conflicts. Naturally, the two will use different strategies to deal with similar conflicts.

**4. Difference in values**

If two chairpersons have different values about issues, ethics or standards etc., they may use different approaches to resolve similar conflicts. For example, a chairperson who values personal relationships may choose to ignore some poor ethics of a colleague, but another who is very particular about ethics, may take up the issue with the individual, and so on. The greater the differences in values, the greater the variation in strategies used. This is strongly supported by the data presented in Table 8.

In the light of the above discussion, it is unrealistic to expect that all chairpersons will use the same strategies to deal with similar conflicts, or even there will be a strong correlation between the source of conflict and the strategies used by different chairpersons. Nonetheless, as discussed earlier, there are some strategies which are used by most of the chairpersons to deal with similar conflicts.

## SUMMARY

This is the one of the most significant chapters of the book. Findings on two major aspects - sources of conflict, and strategies used by the chairpersons to deal with conflict - have been presented. Even though both male and female chairpersons took part in the study, no distinction was made among the chairpersons based on gender, experience, the departments in which they taught, and race or ethnicity. There were nine female and seventeen male chairpersons.

The important sources of conflict as identified in this study include substandard performance, incongruent values/ethics, incongruent expectations of responsibilities/issues, power/authority, communication problems, disagreements between groups over academic matters, disagreements over organizational matters, disagreements with administration over allocation of resources/personnel, personality problems, student issues, and budgetary problems.

Strategies used by the chairpersons to deal with conflicts include preventing or containing conflict, information management, strengthening own position for impending action, coercing, transferring responsibility to committees, mediating, biding time, dissimulating, compromising, utilizing professional help to change behavior, being assertive, and separating the conflictuants.

Even though the data are inconclusive, there does seem to be some relationship between the sources of conflict and the strategies used by the chairpersons to manage conflict. There are some strategies which most of the chairpersons seem to follow to deal with similar conflicts. The apparent differences in strategies can be explained by the contextual factors, personal stake of the chairpersons, training of the chairpersons in conflict management, and differences in own values of the chairpersons.

# CHAPTER 7

# DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

## SOURCES OF CONFLICT, STRATEGIES, AND VALUES

The importance and relevance of the findings will be discussed in this chapter. The discussion will be organized as follows: The concept of conflict, sources of conflict, strategies used to manage conflict, relationship between strategies and conflict sources, and values. Implications of the findings, and future considerations will be discussed at the end.

### THE CONCEPT OF CONFLICT

Whether the chairpersons were able to define conflict or not, they understood it well. The episodes described during the interviews seemed to cover a wide range of definitions of interpersonal conflict including non-cooperation, disagreements in a wide variety of areas, and third party problems where the chairpersons were not directly affected. Even a perception that another colleague was about to cause some harm to the chairperson was thought of as a conflict. Such situations did not involve a direct goal frustration which seems to be the main requirement in most definitions of conflict.

When they were asked to describe an episode of conflict, they did not ask for a definition of conflict, and the researcher purposely did not provide a definition to them so as to get their notion of interpersonal conflict. The nature of the episodes described revealed that the concept of conflict had multiple meanings to the chairpersons.

**DEFINITION OF CONFLICT:** Since many conflict episodes described by the chairpersons do not seem to be covered by the accepted definitions of conflict, a new definition of conflict is in order. A definition that seems to emerge from the data gathered is "Conflict originates when a party perceives that it cannot have its own way of doing things or running its operation smoothly, or it cannot achieve its goals because another party opposes, or has placed an "unreasonable" demand, or has violated some rules. Conflict may stay latent for a while or may manifest in the form of a struggle to control interests".

## SOURCES OF CONFLICT

A comparison of the sources identified in this study with those identified by other researchers (Loewen, 1983; Boyd, 1989; Holder, 1991; Fris, 1991 & 1992; McIntosh, 1992; and Eiserman 1993) in educational and health related fields is presented in Table 9. As can be seen from the table, most of the sources identified in the present study have also been identified in educational settings and in health related fields. There are only two sources - disagreements over academic matters, and student issues - which have not been identified in other fields. The possible reasons for this difference are discussed below.

## TABLE 9

A comparison of sources of conflict identified in the present study and those identified in other educational organizations and health related fields.

| Source | Researchers | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 1. Substandard Performance | X | X | | X | | X | |
| 2. Values/Beliefs/Ethics | X | X | | | X | X | X |
| 3. Roles/Responsibilities/Issues | X | X | | | X | X | X |
| 4. Power/Authority | X | | X | X | | | |
| 5. Communication Problems | X | | X | | | | X |
| 6. Academic Matters | X | | | | | | |
| 7. Organizational Matters | X | X | X | | | | |
| 8. Resources/Personnel | X | | | | X | X | X |
| 9. Personality Problems | X | | | | | X | X |
| 10. Student Issues | X | | | | | | |
| 11. Budgetary Problems | X | | X | | | | |
| 12. Goal Differences | | X | X | X | | X | |
| 13. Differing Methods | | X | X | X | X | | |
| 14. Lack of Cooperation | | | | | | | X |
| 15. Noncompliance | | | | | | X | |
| 16. Gender Issues | | | | | | | X |
| 17. Attacks on Integrity | | | | | | | X |

Researchers: 1 = Present research 2 = Loewen 3 = Boyd
4 = Holder 5 = Fris 6 = McIntosh
7 = Eiserman

## SOURCES NOT IDENTIFIED IN OTHER STUDIES

### Disagreements over academic matters

The obvious reason for the differences is the special nature of the research project. The group of people who were the focus of this study were all academics. Their main task involves dealing with academic matters in an academic environment. The differences in opinions and in approaches among the members of the chairpersons' groups had to be based in academic matters. Such differences can serve as sources of conflict. The studies done by other researchers did not involve people so closely related to academic environments. Also, this source is not completely dissimilar to "disagreements over goals, or over methods" identified in other studies.

In other fields the goals may be to provide excellent health care to the patients, or to have balanced budgets, but in colleges and schools, the main goal is to provide quality education - an academic matter.

### Student issues

Again, this conflict source is quite understandable in educational institutes because students are one of the major players there, and the chairpersons have to deal with them on regular basis. Issues, such as behavior or attitude of students, or their unacceptable performance, could lead to conflicts for the chairpersons directly or indirectly. So, student issues is a relevant source of conflict only in teaching departments.

## SOURCES NOT IDENTIFIED IN THIS STUDY

Conflict sources reported in other studies but not identified in the present study include noncompliance (McIntosh, 1992), lack of cooperation, gender issues, and attacks on personal integrity (Eiserman, 1993), and goal differences (Loewen, 1983; Boyd, 1989; Holder, 1991; Fris, 1992). These differences are discussed next.

### Noncompliance/Lack of cooperation

Even though noncompliance, and lack of cooperation are two different sources, they are quite similar. In many cases, lack of cooperation could be considered as noncompliance.In this discussion they will be treated as the same. Noncompliance by a subordinate could be a valid source of conflict, but in colleges, noncompliance is not very likely to happen for the following reasons:

- All members of the chairpersons' groups are highly educated. Most of them know their responsibilities and rights well, and are reasonable and rational people. Normally they do not try to overstep their rights. Collegiality is expected of all of them.
- Faculty members enjoy their "academic freedom" rights, and are very independent in most academic matters. There is not much interference from the chairpersons, and the chairpersons do not experience much interference from their superordinates.

- Chairpersons are appointed for three or four years terms only; so they are not really "bosses". And because they are not "bosses", they take a friendly and pleasant approach when dealing with their colleagues, and thus do not alienate them.

In other words, there are very few excuses for the members to show noncompliance.

**Goal differences and differing methods**

Goal differences, and differing methods can be compared to the "disagreements over academic matters" of the present study. The main goal of academic departments is the success of students. However, there could be differences among various subject groups over hours of instruction per week for different courses; whether lab hours should be considered equivalent to lecture hours; and work loads, etc. Also, there could be differences in opinion on the subject matter to be covered for different courses, and so on. In addition to the success of students, there could be other goals to be achieved by colleges. Such goals could include achieving equity in employment, balancing budgets, adding or deleting educational programs, and achieving enrollment targets, and so on. Even though chairpersons could make such recommendations, these decisions are made by academic councils, senior administrators, and boards of colleges. May be that is why this source was not identified in the present study.

**Gender issues**

Gender issues were identified as a source of conflict in one study only. Gender issues did not surface as a source of conflict in the present study even though there were nine female chairpersons in a group of twenty six. The absence of this source could be attributed to the following reasons.

- Education makes a big difference in the thinking of people. They are less prejudiced towards other people, and respect them for their qualities and not for their appearances. Bowen (1991) holds the following opinion about educated people:

> They are more aware of diversity of opinions and outlooks, of the legitimacy of disagreements, and of the uncertain and contingent nature of truth. They are more tolerant of ambiguity and relativity, and more willing to think in terms of probabilities rather than certainties. They are less swayed by tradition and convention. They are less authoritarian, less prejudiced, and less dogmatic. (p. 274)

- The number of female students and faculty has been increasing in colleges over the past several years, and is still rising. People are getting used to this fact. Not only that, they are aware of the need to have more female administrators.
- Since chairpersons are appointed for short terms only, even if some people had some negative feelings towards a chairperson, they know that the chairperson would not be around for too long. So, they try not to show such feelings.

### Attacks on integrity

Attacks on personal or professional integrity was identified as a source of conflict by one researcher only. Therefore, it does not seem to be a common source of conflict. A reason for this low frequency could be that it does not seem natural that someone will unleash such attacks on another individual without some objective. Attacking is a manifestation of some feelings towards others for which there is a reason. Such reason could be rooted purely in some kind of personal gain for the attacker in damaging the reputation of the individual in question, or it could also be the aftermath of some previous unresolved conflict. "Personal attacks" of this nature do not seem to be the real cause of conflict. There has to be some other cause at the bottom of such attacks. May be that is why this source was not identified in other studies.

## COMPARISON BETWEEN STRATEGIES USED TO MANAGE CONFLICT

A comparison of strategies identified in this investigation is made with those identified by a select group of researchers in educational and health organizations (Loewen, 1983; Holder, 1991; Fris, 1991, 1992; McIntosh, 1992; Eiserman, 1993) and others (Demo, 1986; Gibson, 1986; Formisano, 1987; Evans, 1991; Growe, 1991; Noble and Rancourt, 1991; and Ward and Price, 1991) for general literature. The comparison is reported in Table 10.

## TABLE 10

Comparison of conflict strategies identified in the present research and those reported in the literature.

| STRATEGY | RESEARCHERS | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| **1. PREVENTING / CONTAINING CONFLICT** | X | | | | | | |
| A. Being sensitive to the needs | X | | | | X | X | X |
| B. Providing support | X | | | X | | X | X |
| C. Being consultative | X | | | | X | X | |
| D. Confronting the issues | X | | | | X | | |
| **2. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT** | X | X | | X | | X | X |
| A. Gather information | X | | | | | | |
| B. Share information | X | | X | | | | |
| C. Informing superordinates | X | | | | | | |
| **3. STRENGTHENING OWN POSITION** | X | X | | | | | |
| A. Seek information | X | | | | X | | |
| B. Organizing coalitions | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| C. Preparing evidence | X | | | | | | |
| D. Covering own butt | X | | | X | X | X | X |
| **4. COERCING** | X | | X | | | | |
| A. Threatening with legal action | X | | | | | | |
| B. Using formal power | X | X | | X | | | X |
| C. Showing disapproval | X | X | | X | | | X |
| **5. TRANSFERRING RESPONSIBILITY** | X | | | | X | | |
| **6. MEDIATING** | X | | X | | X | | |
| A. Providing guidance | X | | | | | | |
| B. Bringing parties together | X | | | | | | |

TABLE 10 (CONTINUED)

| STRATEGY | RESEARCHERS | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| **7. BIDING TIME** | X | X | | X | | | X |
| A. Non-action | X | | | | | | |
| B. Avoiding hasty action | X | | | | X | | |
| C. Avoiding the issue | X | | | | X | | X |
| **8. DISSIMULATING** | X | X | | | | | |
| **9. COMPROMISING** | X | | X | | | | |
| A. Accepting blame / responsibility | X | | | X | X | | |
| B. Accepting demands | X | X | | X | X | | X |
| **10. UTILIZING PROFESSIONAL HELP** | X | | | | | | |
| **11. BEING ASSERTIVE** | X | | | | | | |
| A. Resisting pressures | X | | | | | | X |
| B. Exercising control | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| **12. SEPARATING CONFLICTUANTS: CONTROLLING ENVIRONMENT** | X | X | | X | X | | X |
| **13. FOLLOWING A MODEL** | | | | | X | | X |
| **14. INDIVIDUALIZING AND FLEXIBILITY** | | | | | | | X |
| **15. DEFERENCE** | | | | | | | X |
| **16. TRUTHFULNESS** | | | | | | | X |

CODE: 1 = Present Study
2 = Loewen
3 = Holder
4 = Fris
5 = McIntosh
6 = Eiserman
7 = General Literature

The strategies reported by the latter group of researchers including Demo, Gibson, Formisano, etc. are reported in one column as "general literature". An examination of Table 10 reveals that most of the strategies identified in the present study have also been reported in one or the other studies. However, there are some striking differences too. For example, preventing conflict has not been used as a major strategy in any of the other studies even though some subcategories have been used. Also, threatening with legal action, and utilizing professional help have not been reported in any of the other studies.

Similarly, there are some strategies which have been reported by other researchers but not identified in the present investigation. They include collaboration, controlling, following a model, individualizing and flexibility, empowerment, deference, avoidance, negotiation, and truthfulness.

The similarities and differences will be discussed next, separately for the health related fields and for other educational organizations.

## HEALTH RELATED FIELDS

### Similarities

Out of the strategies identified by the researchers in the health related fields, "collaboration" can be compared to "exploring alternatives", "controlling" to "assertiveness", "empowerment" to "transferring responsibility", "avoidance" to "avoiding the issue", and "negotiation" to "compromising". However, there is no close correspondence between following a model, individualizing and flexibility, deference, and truthfulness on the one hand, and the rest of the strategies identified in the present study on the other.

The possible reasons for the differences are discussed next.

**Differences**

The differences in strategies discussed earlier can be attributed to the following factors:

**1. Nature of relationship:** From the strategy "deference" used to manage conflict in health related fields which requires nurses to show respect to the doctors, it is quite clear that there is definitely a relationship of different status between the doctors and the nurses. Nurses, with the present qualifications, will never be promoted to the ranks of doctors. However such differences in status do not exist between principals and superintendents, or between chairpersons and faculty. An instructor has the potential to become a chairperson, and a principal could become a superintendent. That kind of difference in status requires a strategy like "deference" to manage conflict in health related fields.

**2. Nature of responsibilities:** Nurses' responsibilities are very different from those of instructors in education. Nurses take care of patients. They handle I.V.

administration (including blood and antibiotics), administer medication, give injections, change dressings, and perform other similar delicate duties. Any mistake in these responsibilities (substandard performance) can lead to serious implications for the patients. Now if a nurse makes a mistake which results in some serious damage to the patient, she has to tell the truth to her supervisor in order to correct the situation (truthfulness strategy). In the case of instructors, such situations do not arise normally. That is why chairpersons do not need to invoke this strategy.

**3. Job security:** Some nursing positions could be cut any time without seriously affecting the operation of a hospital. As a result, nurses do not have enough job security. Because of this job insecurity, nurses have a low morale which affects their job performance. They need this assurance all the time that their job is safe. Such assurance (individualizing and flexibility strategy) enhances their job efficiency and reduces conflict. In colleges, jobs cannot be eliminated so easily without affecting the course offerings. Also, collective agreements provide effective job security for college instructors. Even if some positions were to be cut, it is not the chairpersons who can do that because they do not have that power. Thus, chairpersons can not use this strategy effectively.

**4. Scheduling**: Nurses are required to work shifts and even on weekends too. In addition, location of work is also important to nurses. So, while making schedules, the nursing supervisors could be accused of favoritism - a conflict situation. This scheduling problem coupled with the other problems discussed above, makes it more difficult for conflicts to be resolved in nursing programs by common approaches. To be fair, and to avoid any possible accusation, nursing supervisor may be following some model (following a model strategy) to deal with the situations. In colleges, problems of this nature including scheduling are much less severe or even non-existent. Chairpersons do not have to use this strategy.

## OTHER EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

We have found out that most of the strategies identified by other researchers used to manage conflict in educational settings have also been identified in the present study. However, chairpersons have been found to use some additional strategies to deal with conflict which have not been identified in other studies. They include "preventing conflict" (even though some subcategories of this strategy have been used in other situation, but not that frequently and not in similar ways), "dissimulation", and "professional help to change behavior". Chairpersons have used "preventing or containing conflict" most frequently, whereas in other settings this approach seems to have been used least often. The following could be some of the possible reasons for these differences:

**1. Nature of the position:** Chairpersons are appointed for short terms (three to five years), and they remain members of the teaching team. When their terms are over, they go back to their former position of full time teaching unless they change jobs. Also, chairpersons do not have significant position power. Even though they are leaders, they are not "bosses" - they are just one among colleagues. Because of these reasons, they cannot afford to apply coercion frequently. Their best approach is to resolve conflicts by taking preventive measure, including confronting the issues. Since they are leaders, they have to exercise control - albeit not frequently - and use some other strategies as necessary, if preventive measures do not work. Other strategies may include "utilizing professional help to change behavior", "dissimulation", and others depending upon the situation and the mode of the chairperson.

**2. Nature of the organization:** The workers (instructors), the chairpersons have to deal with most of the time in colleges, are very highly qualified individuals, and they are experts in their fields. They expect their leaders to use a collaborative approach to solving most conflicts. Also, small colleges, like the one under study, are for the most part collegial systems (Birnbaum, 1984) where most decisions are supposed to be made using a participative approach. Resolving conflicts involves decision making. For these reasons, strategies, like "coercion", "win-lose orientation", and other pressure tactics are frowned upon, and are not very effective. Nonetheless, they have to be used under special circumstances.

**3. Training in conflict management:** Even though most of the chairpersons had no formal training in conflict management, they do have such training under fire. Having spent so much time working with people when they were students and during their teaching years, having observed other chairpersons resolving conflicts, and having read about conflict management, most of them have enough training - informal, if not formal - to realize that constructive resolution of conflict requires confronting the issues (not the individuals) and finding some solution through collaborative process whenever possible. That is why chairpersons follow these approaches most of the time.

**4. Personal Style** : As Hocker, and Wilmot (1985) point out, people develop their own repertoire of strategies to deal with conflict. They develop strategies that make sense to them. Also, strategies change withe time. Therefore, one of the reasons accounting for the differences could be the personal repertoire of the individuals.

# OTHER APPROACHES

## THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION

Often the chairpersons had to mediate in conflict situations involving two instructors, the dean and the department, or an instructor and a student. When chairpersons played the role of a mediator, they either counselled the two parties where by they changed the expression of conflict (Hocker and Wilmot, 1985) thus helping them to smooth relations; or brought the parties together and facilitated an exchange of ideas or complaints against each other, to patch up differences. This approach is similar to the third party intervention as described by Hocker and Wilmot (1985).

## BARGAINING

Bargaining did not emerge as a strategy in the present study. This may be so because bargaining, as discussed by Shellenberg (1982), is not a part of the chairpersons' terms of reference. All conventional bargaining between the boards and the faculty takes place through negotiating teams. For other types of conflict compromising, not bargaining, did emerge as a strategy.

## COERCION OR THE USE OF FORCE

As far as possible the chairpersons avoided the use of force or coercion to manage conflict. However, there were situations when they used it. But even there the use of coercion was mild. Initially they expressed disapproval or anger to convey a clear message that the behavior or the actions of the other party were not acceptable. They took more drastic steps only when after the above strategy did not produce desirable results. Only in two cases did the chairpersons threaten the opposing parties with legal action, but, they never used that. In three situations they used formal power to terminate the services of the instructors involved.

This strategy is similar to "the use of force", described earlier by Shellenberg (1982), and Owens (1987).

## MODELS OF CONFLICT, AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSONS

A careful look at Table 7 reveals that the most frequently used strategy was "preventing or containing conflict". It was used by all the chairpersons in one form or the other at least once, in the two or three episodes described by them. Thus it can be concluded that in general, the chairpersons strived to prevent conflicts whenever possible. They seemed to use other strategies only when the conflicts could not be prevented or contained in initial stages. The second most used strategy was "information management". Even this strategy was used to contain or prevent conflict in many cases, especially when it was used to share information. Also, when we look at the values held by the chairpersons (Table 6), it becomes clear that the chairpersons valued being sensitive to the needs of their colleagues and the students. They were caring, and helpful administrators, and they tried not to hurt the pride of others. They also valued collegiality, and harmony.

With such intentions, and with their efforts to prevent or contain conflict, there could not have been many conflicts which were not solved to the satisfaction of the parties involved. In fact, not a single episode described by the chairpersons involved a conflict which was the result of some dissatisfaction of the players because the conflict was not resolved to their satisfaction. This is not to say that the chairpersons were always able to manage conflicts successfully. On the contrary, there were a couple of conflicts which were inherited by the present chairpersons from their predecessors, but again, the cause of those conflicts was not the frustration of the opposing party resulting from the unsuccessful resolution of the conflict, rather it was their performance or attitude.

## PONDY'S MODEL

Pondy's model posits that some conflicts start as a result of a "preceding aftermath" of some unresolved conflict. But out of the 48 conflict episodes described by the chairpersons, only two were a continuation of some preceding conflicts, the rest were episodes of fresh conflicts. Also, most of the conflicts did not seem to follow a clear sequence from perceived conflict to manifest conflict even though some of the conflicts described stayed latent for some time. More over, Pondy's model does not cover the possibility of prevention or containment of the conflict before it becomes manifest. However, the present study shows that many chairpersons were aware of some possible conflicts and they took measures (e.g. empathetic listening, avoiding surprises, etc.) to prevent or to contain conflicts. Thus there was not enough evidence or enough data to conclude whether Pondy's model was fully supported.

## PROCESS MODEL

Process model assumes that frustration on the part of a party leads to the conceptualization of a conflict. Its development thereafter depends upon the reactions of the other party, and the behavior of the party in question. It could either be resolved, or be fully blown.

As discussed earlier in this chapter under the "concept of conflict", the requirement of "frustration" seems too strong a term for the definition of conflict. Disagreements on a number of issues (including academic matters, organizational matters, and allocation of resources) were considered conflicts by the chairpersons. Such disagreements did not necessarily mean that the parties to a conflict perceived any frustration for not being able to achieve their goals. Similarly having differences in values or ethics did not necessarily mean that a party experienced any frustration. Thus, this aspect of the process model was not supported by the present study. However, the other aspects of the model were supported because the chairpersons did modify their strategies in response to the actions of the other party. Also, when a conflict was not resolved, the episode was repeated. For example, when a particular chairperson was not successful in resolving a conflict, his successor was faced with the same conflict again. Such an episode was a part of the data. Hence, the study supports the process model to some degree.

## OPEN SYSTEM MODEL

Departments in colleges are open systems because not only are they are dependent on one another, they are also influenced by outside agencies. Many faculty teach in more than one departments, and many students take courses in more than one departments. All departments share the same library, and many departments share computer labs, science labs, and many classrooms. Thus, there are problems of scheduling. There is only one registrar's office which interacts with all the departments, and all departments receive monies from the same sources. Therefore, departments are open systems.

Hocker's and Wilmot's (1985) views on conflict in open systems have already been reviewed earlier. They advocate that there are no villains, heroes, good and bad people, healthy or unhealthy members. That may be so; however, when we look at the frequencies of sources of conflict (Table

13), it is clear that it is the actions or attitudes of individuals that give rise to conflicts most of the time. So, Hocker's and Wilmot's claim that there are no villains, was not supported by the present research.

Hocker and Wilmot also maintain that triangles tend to form in systems when relations are close and intense. Again, it may be true, but, this type of situation did not surface in the episodes described by the chairpersons. The reason for this absence of triangle formation may lie in the fact that the conflicts described did not affect a large number of people as a group. But, whatever the reason, even this point made by Hocker and Wilmot was not sustained.

Two other important points were made by them:

1. Conflict serves as a function for the system and,
2. systems develop rules to deal with conflicts.

The data obtained did not provide insights on the first point. No function to be served was evident from the episodes. However, rules to deal with some types of conflict were in place although they did not cover all types of conflict.

## VALUES

Another important objective of this study was to determine the values held by the chairpersons. First, the values identified in the present study will be tested if they meet the criteria set by Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1978), and Frances, and Woodcock (1990) for the nature of values, and if they satisfy the assumptions put forward by Rokeach (1977). The values will also be compared to those identified by other researchers, and will be categorized according to the typologies developed by Hodgkinson (1983), and Ashbaugh and Kasten (1984).

## TEST OF CRITERIA FOR THE NATURE AND ASSUMPTIONS OF VALUES

If we examine Table 5 carefully, we will find that the values held by the chairpersons meet the criteria for the nature of values as set by Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1978), and Francis, and Woodcock (1990). The values are limited in number (only 7 categories), and they seem to be consistent with one another. For example, consideration for others, collegiality, harmony, and good work ethics, are all consistent with one another. Even the other values - esteem for the department/college, fostering innovation, and personal achievement - are in no way inconsistent with the others.

The values are actionable, and they do seem to enhance performance because these are the values that underlie the strategies used to manage conflict, and thus enhance performance. They are also capable of being communicated because in the process of conflict management, values come out at the surface clearly. In some cases they were even revealed explicitly. For example opposition to patronage and special treatment was clearly voiced; and leaving lines of communication was also a clear indication of values. These were the main criteria for the nature of values.

The values also seem to satisfy the assumptions put forward by Rokeach (1977). The values identified are not unique to the chairpersons, similar values are held by other administrators in educational institutions (one of the assumptions). The data seem to indicate that the conflict handling strategies of the chairpersons were influenced by their values. In other words, the consequences of the values were manifested in the strategies (another assumption). Also, the values are indeed organized into different systems, and they seem to be rooted in the culture of the institution. Thus they seem to satisfy Rokeach's assumptions.

## COMPARISON OF VALUES

A comparison of values identified in the present study with those reported by other researchers is presented in Table 11. An examination of the table discloses that whereas there are some similarities, there are some striking differences too. In fact, there are fewer similarities, but more differences. The similarities are not unexpected because according to the criteria for the nature of values discussed above, all human beings have some values in common. Thus, it is not surprising to see some similarities. So, only the differences will be discussed below.

**Differences**

There could be a number of reasons for the differences in the values identified, and those reported by other researchers. Such reasons could include the nature of the organization, gradual changes in individuals' values, level of education, and the nature of the methodology used.

- **The nature of the organization:** As claimed by Johns (1988) people normally choose their careers or occupations where their values are supported. It is natural that people in different fields have different values.

Values, such as "caring for colleagues and for students", "resolving conflicts as soon as possible", "opposing immoral or unethical actions", "being open to new ideas", "using coercion as infrequently as possible", and other values held by the chairpersons are high moral values and are very appropriate for the type of organization they work for.

- **Gradual change:** According to Spindler (1963), and Hodgkinson (1970), people's values undergo changes with time and with their changing roles. It is possible that the chairpersons have values different from other people because of the two reasons mentioned above. They have matured over the years, and their roles have also changed since they became chairpersons.

## TABLE 11

Comparison of values identified in this study with those in noneducational organizations.

| Value | Researcher | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Consideration for others | X | X | | | X | |
| Collegiality | X | | | | | X |
| Harmony | X | X | | | | |
| Esteem for the Department/College | X | | | | | |
| Work Ethics | X | X | X | | | |
| Fostering Innovation | X | | | | | X |
| Personal Achievement | X | X | | X | | X |
| Puritan Morality | | X | | X | X | |
| Individualism | | X | X | | X | X |
| Democracy | | | | X | | X |
| Relativistic Morals | | X | X | | | |
| Sociability | | X | | X | X | |
| Goal Attainment | | | X | | | X |
| Hedonism | | X | | | X | |
| Equal Oppportunity | X | | X | | | X |
| Justice | X | | | | | X |
| Academic Achievement | | | | X | | X |

Code: 1 = Present Research 2 = Spindler 3 = Lipset
4 = Allport et al 5 = Morris 6 = Osborn et al

- **Level of education:** As discussed earlier in this chapter, Bowen (1991) believes that people's values depend upon the level of their education. Since all the chairpersons were highly educated people, it is not surprising to find that their values are different from other people.
- **The nature of the methodology used:** Most of the research reported on values was done using questionnaires where people were given lists of values and they had to choose from those lists. In the present study, interviews were the only source of the data collected. No questionnaire was used to elicit information, and no list of values was provided. Because of the difference in methodology, the values emerged could be different from those reported by others.

## CATEGORIZATION OF VALUES

The values identified in the present study are categorized below (Table 12) into the typologies developed by Hodgkinson (1983), and Ashbaugh and Kasten (1984) to determine if they meet those criteria.

As is clear from the table, the chairpersons' values fit nicely into the two typologies thus meeting their broad criteria.

## TABLE 12

## Hodgkinson, and Ashbaugh and Kasten Typologies, and Chairperson Values

| Chairperson Values | Hodgkinson | Ashbaugh and Kasten |
|---|---|---|
| ▪ Consideration For Others<br>▪ Personal Achievement | Type III | Personalistic |
| ▪ Collegiality<br>▪ Harmony | Type II | Organizational |
| ▪ Esteem For Department<br>▪ Work Ethics<br>▪ Fostering Innovation | Type I | Transcendental |

## DISCUSSION OF THE METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for the present study allowed to collect rich data from which sources of conflict, strategies used by the chairpersons to manage conflict, and values emerged, resulting in the findings reported earlier. Most of the results are quite comparable to those reported by other researchers working in the field of conflict management even though their areas were different. The sources of conflict and the conflict management strategies identified in this investigation were quite similar. Where there were some differences, they could be explained in terms of differences in the nature of the organizations and the groups of people studied, and some other factors. Thus, it could be claimed that the methodology used was suitable for the study pursued.

However, there was some difficulty in explaining all the differences satisfactorily. This was particularly true in the case of values. Values identified in the present research were very different from those listed by Rokeach (1979), and those reported by others (Lipset, 1963; Morris, 1956; Spindler, 1963; Hodgkinson, 1970; Rokeach, 1979; Ashbaugh and Kasten, 1984). It is possible that the interviews might not have yielded all the data, and a few things might be missing. No direct questions were asked of the chairpersons about the values they held; values were inferred from the interviews. To make certain that all the necessary data are collected, and nothing relevant is left out, the following recommendations are made:

- A questionnaire be mailed to the group of people to be studied asking them questions pertinent to the research, and enough time be provided for them to think clearly about the questions before they answer them. However, one must be aware of the fact that questionnaires or other structured data gathering methods may elicit "forced" or "artificial" responses thereby affecting the validity of the results.
- The researcher spend some time with the chairpersons for unobtrusive observation to find out how they manage conflict and what values underlie their conflict management strategies. Of course, there are some dangers to the validity of the research associated with this kind of observation, but if the researcher is mindful of them, the advantages of collecting more rich data outweigh the dangers to validity.

It may be added that the recommendations being made here are not to replace the interview approach which provides meaningful enough data, but rather to supplement the interview approach; the two approaches are not complementary. One of the two alternatives recommended in addition to the interview approach should provide sufficient data to yield good results.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR COLLEGE BOARDS AND ADMINISTRATORS

The results of this study would be helpful for college boards and for administrators in many ways. They can take measures to reduce the sources of conflict so that less time and energy is consumed in resolving conflicts which did not have to be there in the first place. They can also provide conflict training to the chairpersons so that they may be able to handle the conflicts better. Both these areas will be discussed in the following pages. To guide this discussion, the sources of conflict along with their frequencies are reproduced in Table 13.

### REDUCING SOURCES OF CONFLICT

An examination of Table 13 reveals that the sources of conflict with which the chairpersons were faced most frequently include substandard performance of instructors, incongruent expectations of responsibilities/issues, incongruent values/ethics, personality problems, student issues, budgetary problems, and disagreements with administration over allocation of resources or personnel. Budgetary problems cannot be easily eliminated; however, measures to reduce each of the sources frequently faced by the chairpersons will be discussed next.

## TABLE 13

## Conflict Sources and Their Frequencies

| Conflict Source | Frequency |
|---|---|
| 1. SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE | |
| A. Poor teaching style/attitude of instructors | 5 |
| B. Poor/very poor performance of instructors | 6 |
| 2. INCONGRUENT VALUES/ETHICS | 6 |
| 3. INCONGRUENT EXPECTATIONS OF RESPONSIBILITIES | 11 |
| 4 POWER/AUTHORITY | 1 |
| 5. COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS: MISPERCEPTIONS | 2 |
| 6. DISAGREEMENTS OVER ACADEMIC MATTERS | 2 |
| 7. DISAGREEMENTS OVER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS | 1 |
| 8. DISAGREEMENTS WITH ADMINISTRATION OVER RESOURCES/PERSONNEL | 3 |
| 9. PERSONALITY PROBLEMS | |
| A. Strong hostility among instructors | 4 |
| B. Strong hostility towards the chairperson | 2 |
| 10. STUDENT ISSUES | 4 |
| 11. BUDGETARY PROBLEMS | |
| A. Dealing with limited resources | 2 |
| B. Major cuts: Eliminating positions | 2 |

**Substandard performance of instructors**

Measures can be put in place to monitor the performance of instructors regularly so as to determine who is not meeting the expectations. This should be joint venture with the faculty associations so that everybody cooperates and the academic freedom of instructors is still maintained. This will allow early detection of poor performance and reduce any surprises and anxiety, and also save everybody time and energy.

**Incongruent expectations of responsibilities/issues**

To avoid any ambiguities in responsibilities, as far as possible, the job descriptions of chairpersons and other administrators should be clarified so that everybody involved knows them. Although there is a limit on how much clarification can be achieved, or even desirable, if present job descriptions are vague, they should be made more clear.

**Incongruent values/ethics**

This is a more sensitive issue. The question is whose values should take precedence. Should they be of the chairpersons, the administrators, the faculty, or somebody else's? In this respect, the culture of the college will prevail. If the board or the administrators of the college want to promote certain values, then the college should have a strong culture. In the absence of a strong culture, there will always be some conflict rooted in the values of the individuals and there may not be a win-win situation.

**Personality problems**

Personality problems were another source of conflict identified in the present study. This is an area where much energy and talent is wasted, and there is no simple cure for this. The following steps are recommended to alleviate the problem.

- Training for chairpersons: Most of the chairpersons interviewed did not have any training in conflict management and they said that they needed some kind of training really badly. "Right now we fly by the seat of our pants" remarked one chairperson; "The only training in conflict management that I had was under fire" said another. A good training in conflict management should cover "How to handle difficult people" along with many other areas. Such training should be available to all interested, and not just the chairpersons.
- Qualifications for chairpersons: It is quite possible that the chairpersons themselves are guilty of being power hungry. Such hunger for power may lead to personality problems. So at the time of hiring, it should be determined some how, whether the candidate has any such tendencies. In case some do, they should not be hired for the position, or if hired, should be replaced as soon as it becomes clear that they are there just for power.

**Student issues**

Students are major players in colleges. There are a number of issues concerning students which may include quality instruction, fair treatment, scheduling of classes and exams, admission requirements, and availability of college facilities, etc. To reduce conflict in these areas, students representatives should be appointed to various department and college committees to voice their concerns. They should have fair input in decision making processes where decisions affect them. Training should be provided to all faculty and students to deal effectively with common issues. Students rights and obligations should be clearly stated in the college calendars and if possible, on the course outlines for various courses. These steps will not eliminate the problems, but at least reduce them, and make their resolution simpler.

**Disagreements over allocation of resources/personnel**

Disagreements with administration over allocation of resources/personnel is a thorny issue and is quite common. It is unlikely that this issue can be completely eliminated, or even reduced. However, a training in negotiations, where each side understands the problems and concerns of the other, might reduce the severity of the problem.

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Conflict management is an important part of organizational activities. No organization can be completely free from conflict; therefore, constructive management of conflict is very important to the successful functioning of organizations. Colleges are organizations and chairpersons play an important role in running the affairs of the colleges. It is important for college faculty, chairpersons, and administrators to know how chairpersons handle conflict. This study was an effort to do just that. The study has illuminated the major sources of conflict facing the chairpersons, the conflict management strategies they use, and the values they hold. An attempt was also made to illuminate any relationships between the conflict management strategies and the sources of conflict.

Most of the findings support expectations generated by previous research, but there are a few things that are different. For example noncompliance or lack of cooperation, gender issues, attacks on personal integrity, and goal differences are some of the sources of conflict not identified in the present study. Similarly, preventing or containing conflict, and utilizing professional help are some of the strategies that have not been reported in other studies. There were many values reported by other researchers, but not identified in the present study. All these differences need further investigation. Also, the relationship between the conflict management strategies and the sources of conflict needs further investigation. Even though some relationship was indicated, it could not be confirmed. Further, no attempt was made to investigate relationships between the values held by the chairpersons and the strategies used by them. Accordingly, future research on college chairpersons could focus on clarifying:

a. If there are differences in strategies used by male and female chairpersons.

b. If chairpersons from minority groups use different strategies.

c. If chairpersons in colleges that are located in bigger cities use different strategies.

d. If there are any differences in strategies used by chairpersons of academic and non-academic programs - including libraries, technical programs and extension services.

e. If the chairpersons of various departments in technical institutes and vocational colleges use different strategies.

f. If the strategies used by chairpersons are related to the values held by them

g. In addition, value differences among various groups (chairpersons of non-academic departments, chairpersons belonging to the minority groups including female chairpersons) and chairpersons in colleges and technical institutes located in bigger cities can also be studied.

## SUMMARY

This chapter examined parallels and discontinuities between the Literature and the data concerning the concept of conflict, sources of conflict, conflict handling strategies used by the chairpersons, and values held by them.

The concept of conflict seemed to have very different meanings to the chairpersons; their definitions seemed to include non-cooperation and disagreements over a wide range of areas. Most of the sources of conflict identified in the present study were similar to the ones reported in the literature; but the disagreements over academic matters, and the conflicts over student issues which were identified in the present study, were not reported in the literature. On the other hand, goal differences, differing methods, non-compliance, lack of cooperation, gender issues, and attacks on personal integrity were some of the conflict sources which were reported in the literature but did not emerge in the present study. Such differences could be attributed to the differences in the nature of the organizations and the categories of administrators studied.

When the reported conflict handling strategies were compared against those described in the Literature, more similarities than differences were found. However, there were still some important differences. For example, chairpersons seemed to be more inclined to prevent or contain conflict by being more sensitive to the needs of others and by confronting the issues as compared to the administrators in other fields. Also, whenever possible, the chairpersons utilized professional help to change behavior of the parties involved in a conflict, a strategy not identified in other areas. Again, such differences could be attributed to the differences in organizations and the groups of administrators studied. There was limited support for each of the three models of conflict - Pondy's model, the "process model", and the "systems model".

The values of the chairpersons emerging in the study were quite different from those reported in the Literature. The nature of the organization, academic qualifications of the chairpersons, changing values, and the methodology used could account for the differences.

The methodology followed was found to be appropriate for the type of research done, however, a questionnaire and/or unobtrusive observation could also be used to supplement data to get a deeper insight.

The findings of the study will be found useful to college boards and administrators in reducing conflict, and in providing training to chairpersons to handle conflicts better. But to provide more clear direction in this respect, more research is needed. Future investigations could include chairpersons of non-academic departments, colleges in bigger cities, vocational and technical institutes, and chairpersons from minority groups including women.

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# APPENDIX A

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Chairpersons were asked to describe in detail two conflict episodes - one which they thought they handled successfully, and the other which they thought they did not handle so successfully. Further questions were asked to seek clarification on some issues arising out of the description, and to collect more rich data.

In addition, some or all of the following questions were also asked, again to get a better picture of the issues and of the approaches used by the chairpersons to manage conflict.

1. Do you face this kind of situation often?
2. Why do you think that this was a successful management of the conflict? What is that you were able to achieve? Will you handle a similar conflict again like this?
3. Why do you think that this was an unsuccessful management of the conflict? What is that you were not satisfied with? What will you do different now, if you were faced with a similar situation again?
4. What factors determine your strategies?
5. Do you have any training in conflict management?
6. If yes, has that training helped you? If not, would you like to have some training in conflict management?
7. What kind of conflict do you find most difficult to manage?

# APPENDIX B

## LETTER TO THE CHAIRPERSONS: REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW

Department of Educational Administration
University of Alberta
Edmonton

Chairperson
An academic department
Public College

Dear Chairperson,

I am working towards my Ph.D degree in educational administration. The subject of my research is conflict management by chairpersons of academic departments in Alberta colleges. This will be one of the very few studies of its kind, and is expected to yield very useful results on the subject, thus filling the vacuum that exists in the literature.

I need your cooperation for this important project. I would like to interview you to find out what strategies you use to manage conflict. The interview will be tape recorded, and will take about an hour. The recording will be transcribed, and the transcript will be brought back to you for verification.

I assure you that anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. If some information has the potential to reveal your identity, I will discuss that with you, and seek your approval before such information is included in my report.

You will be asked to describe two episodes of conflict - one which you think you handled successfully, and another which you think you did not handle so successfully. So, please try to recall two conflicts.

Also, will you please, answer the following questions and hand in the responses at the time of interview.

a. How long have you served as chairperson?
b. What is your total administrative experience?
c. What is your total experience as an educator?
d. Do you have any training in conflict management?

Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you very much.

Yours cordially

Devinder S Sekhon